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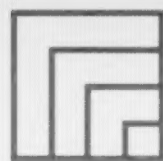
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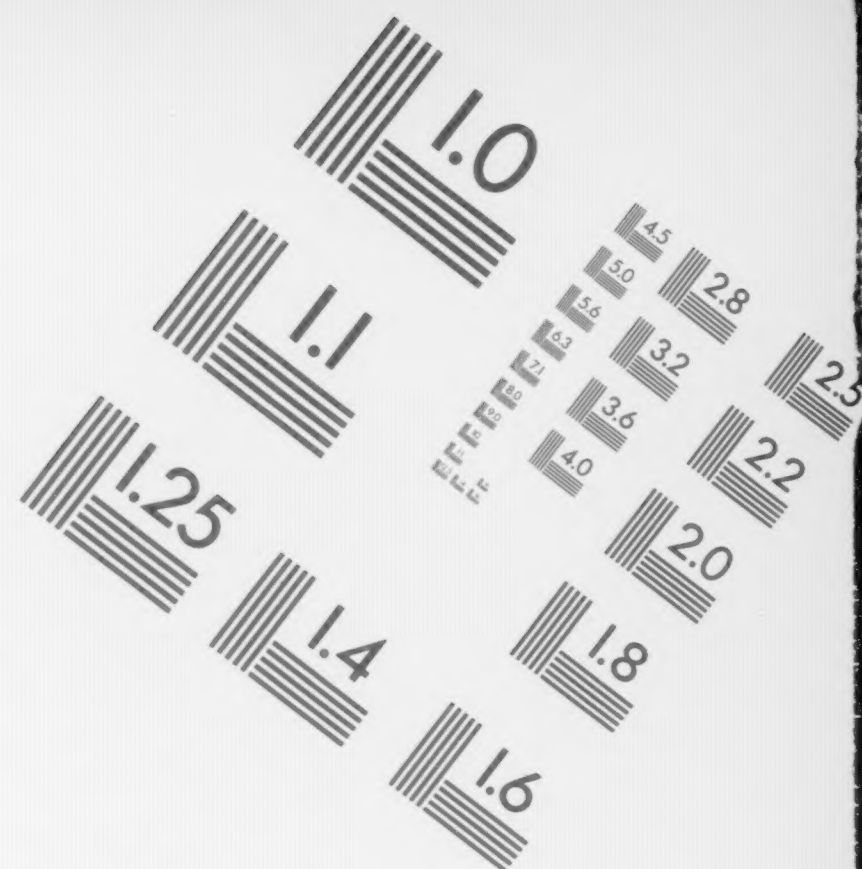
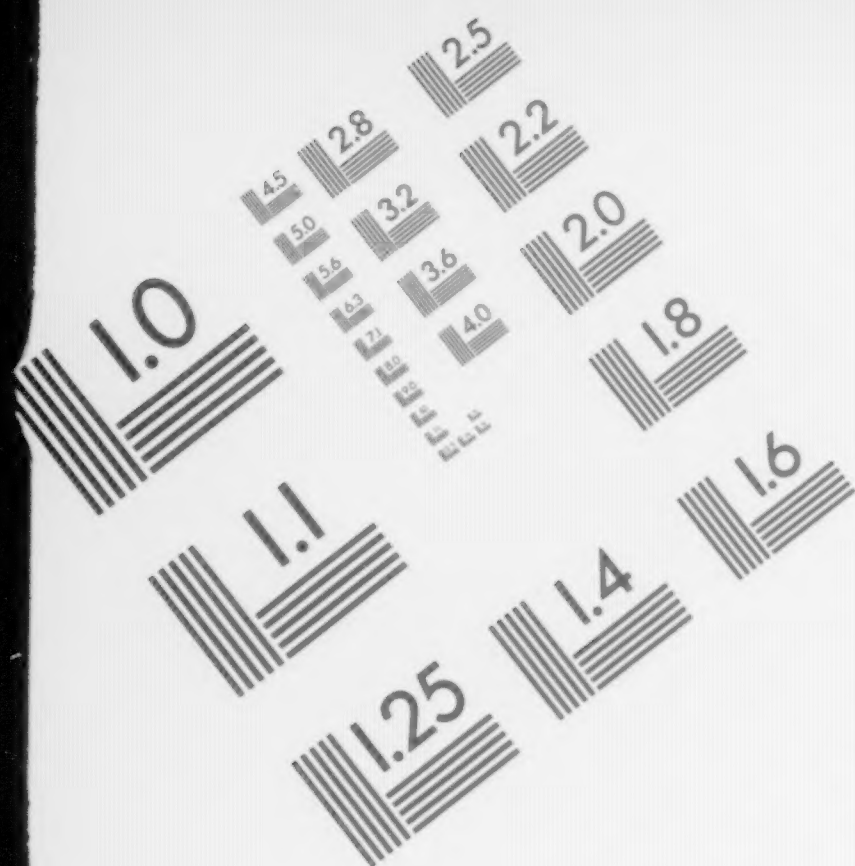


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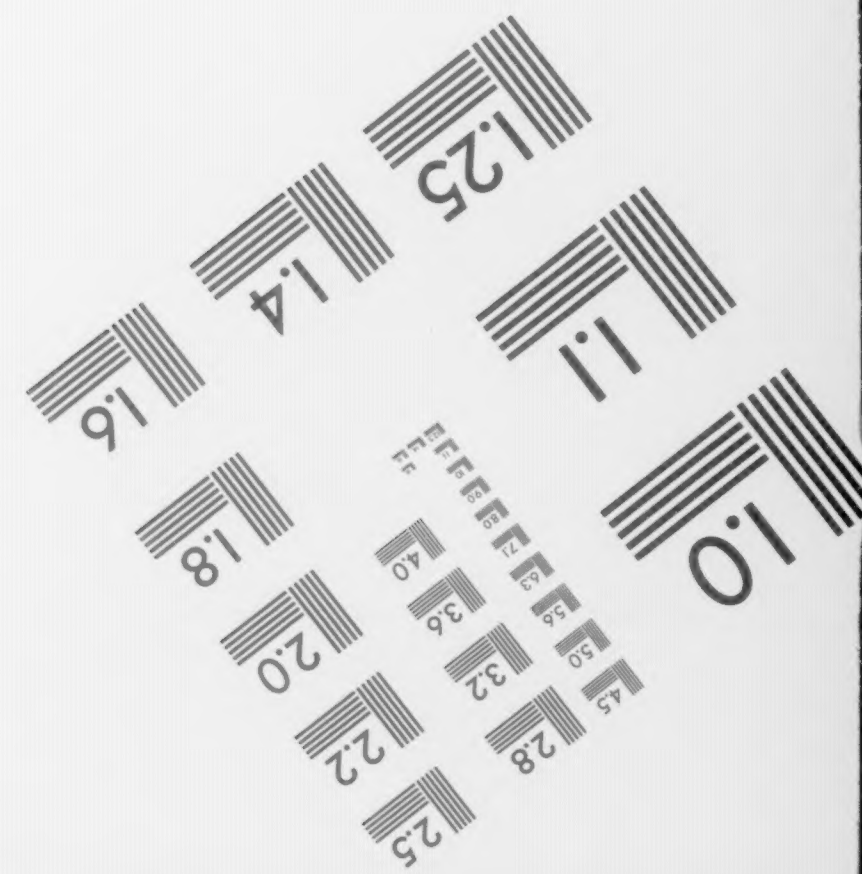
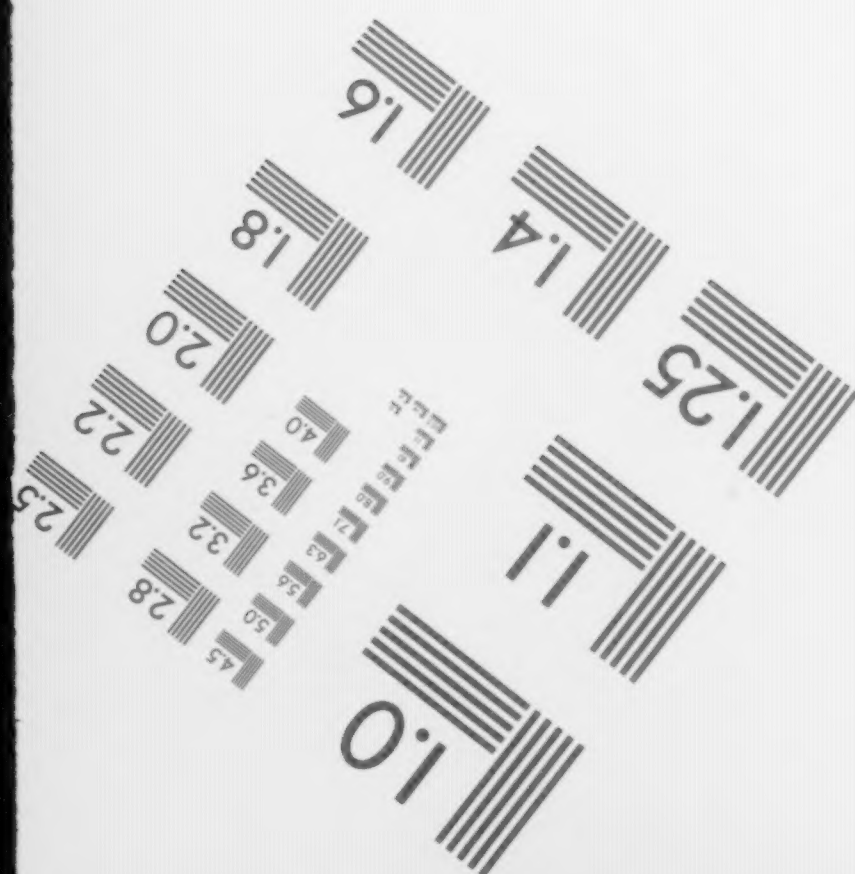
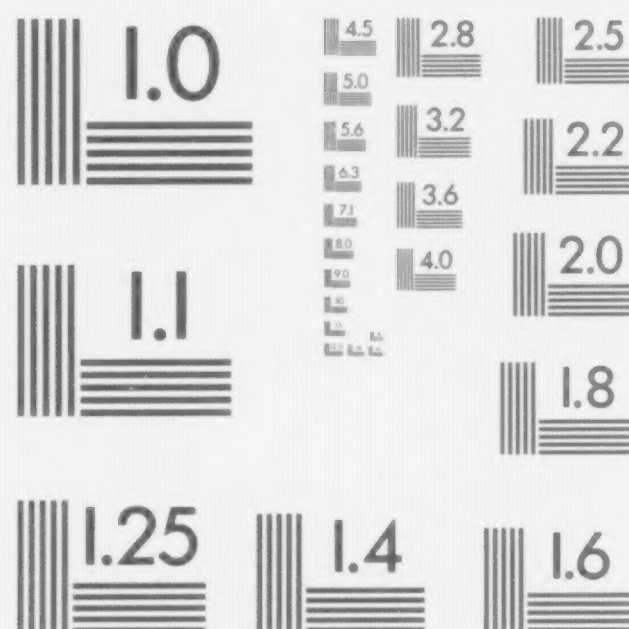
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THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASES OF  
ASCETICISM

IN THE PLATONIC WRITINGS  
AND IN PRE-PLATONIC TRADITION

A THESIS

Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
June, 1921

---

BY

IRL COLDWIN WHITCHURCH, A.M.,

FORMERLY FELLOW IN THE SAGE SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

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## PREFACE

Originally the following study was undertaken with a purpose of determining the significance of self-sacrifice in the moral life. It soon appeared that a decided advantage lay in selecting as a basis of operation some outstanding ethical system. Accordingly, I began work, on the Platonic Writings. After prolonged search and repeated readings I made what was, to me at least, a belated discovery. The earlier Socratic Dialogues are not a series of inconsequential "negative arguments." They set forth a fairly well formulated and representative standpoint in ethical theory current in the fifth century B. C. These earlier Platonic Writings embody a constructive criticism on popular ethical opinions which in a general way represent the highest reach of ethical thought, and which an admiring pupil likes to attribute to his illustrious teacher, Socrates. The "inconclusive" treatment of the questions under discussion reveal the insight of a mind that has advanced beyond the limitations of the standpoint of ethical reflection in that period. A confident undertone in the "Socratic" dialogues emanates from one who in grappling with these moral problems outstripped his contemporaries and discovered a new fulcrum upon which to rest his lever.

The vast difference in the two points of view is readily disclosed by a careful comparative study of two such dialogues as the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*. Here we have a chart of the way in which the transition was accomplished from the Socratic to the Platonic standpoint. The basis for this new departure in ethical thought becomes more prominent in later and more extended discussions. In the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, for example, the confident undertone develops into a reasoned boldness in elaborating the contradiction between reason and sensibility, the good and the pleasant. To make clear the grounds of this antagonism in moral experience is the main task with which the study is concerned.

I am under no illusion concerning deficiencies in the translated passages incorporated in the text, and I disclaim any intention of offering a translation of Plato. The only advantage claimed is a personal one. They have been a primary factor in advancing the



writer toward whatever degree of sympathetic appreciation of Plato's mind the study may have.

To the members of the Sage School of Philosophy I am grateful for their stimulus toward and example in scholarship. I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to Professors J. E. Creighton, Frank Thilly, and Ernest Albee for helpful suggestion and friendly encouragement, the extent of which I cannot measure. The study itself was carried on under the personal direction of Professor William A. Hammond. For his special help on several difficult passages of translation as well as for reading the entire manuscript and the proof, and for his suggestions of many improvements, I am most deeply indebted. Finally, I desire to make acknowledgment to my friend, Dr. Glenn R. Morrow, for his kindness in reading the proof and for his helpful criticism.

*Evanston, Illinois,  
June, 1923.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE SOCRATIC-PYTHAGOREAN TRADITION

There is a legend that Plato used to thank the gods that he was a human being instead of a brute, a man and not a woman, a Greek rather than a barbarian; but most of all that he was born in the time of Socrates. The legend, true or false, accords with the manner in which he sought to acknowledge the debt to his master. The character of Socrates in the Platonic Dialogues is the *vita* *via* which incarnates the ideal standard of the moral life. By this character, not by word only, does Plato pass judgment upon the scale of values by which men live. Well does Socrates intercept the hasty departure of a representative contemporary when he was about to close a discussion on the nature of morality by his suggestive eulogy of injustice. "Excellent Thrasymachus, do you intend to conclude such a discussion by going away before you have fairly taught or learned whether your words are true or not? Or do you consider it a minor affair to set out upon the determination of that philosophy (*δλου βλου διαγωγην*) by which each one of us shall live the best life?"<sup>1</sup> Here the antithesis between *τὸ ζῆν* and *τὸ εἶ ζῆν* is clearly anticipated. Plato tells us this is the real issue of the *Republic*.

In Plato's thought, moral experience discloses some salient distinctions, not to say, mutually exclusive elements. Plato seems to glory in its dual form. Both in literary diction of dialogue and argument and in *dramatis personae* the discordant aspects of the moral life are vividly portrayed. Plato is fond of Euripides' phrase: "Who knows but that life is death and death is life?"<sup>2</sup> No friendship is possible between antithetical characters. Alcibiades the fair and supple youth offered to Socrates all his possessions, and the wealth of his friends. Socrates accorded him appropriate consideration: "If you really observe in me the power to make you better, and you mean to share with me and exchange good for good, you plan to gain no small advantage over me; you are trying to obtain true beauty for the price

<sup>1</sup>*Republic* I, 344 D-E. Translations are made from Burnet's edition of the text in *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis*.

<sup>2</sup>*Gorgias*, 492 E.



of appearance; really you propose to exchange 'gold for brass.'"<sup>1</sup> Plato knew the power of contrast. Outwardly his hero was uncouth, but what temperance resided within! "Know that external adornments are utterly disregarded by him, he despises them beyond one's power of estimation; riches too, or any other honor admired and coveted by the multitude, are of no account to him. He considers all such possessions of no value, and that we, I tell you, are nobodies; he spends all his time mocking and flouting mankind. But when he is in earnest and discloses the inward man—I don't know whether anyone has ever seen the images therein, but I have, and they are golden and divine, marvelous and altogether beautiful; I was ready to do in a moment whatever Socrates commended."<sup>2</sup> So far removed is the 'spiritual' from the 'natural' man. A perpetual antagonism divides the inner and the outer phases of a moral life. The values of truth and goodness dispute the claims of the pleasures of sense. The worth of a world-denying morality is heralded in this selection by advice from the 'glorious dead.' "Mindful of our counsels, it is necessary that you exercise with virtue whatever you undertake, knowing that without this all possessions and pursuits are shameful and evil. For riches cannot bring honor to the possessor, if he be a coward; of such a man the wealth belongs to another, and not to himself. Nor does beauty and strength of body harmoniously dwell in a cowardly and base fellow; the combination is incongruous, and makes the subject of it more conspicuous in manifesting cowardice. All knowledge, when divorced from justice and virtue, is craftiness, not wisdom. Wherefore, first, last, and always, make it your all absorbing aim, so far as in you lies, to excel us and your ancestors in virtue; but know that if we surpass you in virtue, the victory brings us shame; excel us, and it brings happiness to us."<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing intimates that Plato viewed the moral life as a task in progressive organization, where something is affirmed and something denied. In this organization there is implied a certain criterion of values which he confidently applies. To what extent does this standard combine self-assertion and self-denial? What is Plato's criterion of the morally good life, and especially, what is the method which conditions its realization? In how far is

<sup>1</sup>*Symposium*, 218 E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 216 D-217 A.

<sup>3</sup>*Menexenus*, 246 E-247 A.

ἀσκήσις<sup>1</sup> a principle of method? What does Plato mean by it? On what basis does he justify it, if at all? These questions indicate the problem with which we are concerned.

Any attempt to get at principles in Plato's conception of morality must involve a fairly comprehensive view of his entire philosophical system. There are two reasons for this. One is that philosophy for Plato is all of one piece; there are no hard and fast lines of demarcation in its subject-matter. Then, too, as J. G. Schurman writes: "Every system of ethics is affiliated to a metaphysics, expressed or understood; and every system of metaphysics carries with it a definite ethics."<sup>2</sup> To no philosophy is this more applicable than to Plato's. And therefore, it is a fair assumption that an understanding of Plato's doctrine of *askesis* requires a brief sketch of the major influences which helped to determine his ethical problem and entered into its treatment. Generally speaking, Plato inherits the whole of Greek thought prior to his time.<sup>3</sup> The Dialogues, as we shall see, warrant the further statement that the live currents in contemporary ethical theory were transmitted to Plato primarily through the Socratic tradition.<sup>4</sup> And it was not until Plato had digested that tradition that he was enabled to free himself from its presuppositions and reconstruct ethics on a new basis.

<sup>1</sup>The word ἀσκήσις (*askēsis*) has three fairly distinct meanings. (1) It refers to the exercise, training, practice, especially of an athlete. Cf. *Rep.* VII, 518 E; *Polit.*, 294 D; (2) practice of or in a thing, as of ἀρετῆς. Xen. *Memor.* I, 2, 20; *Prot.*, 323 D; *Laws* VII, 791 B; (3) It is used (a) of a mode of life, a profession, (b) of a philosophical sect, (c) in ecclesiastical literature, of the monastic life, of asceticism. See Lidell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

In the ethical sense *askesis* indicates a life of discipline. "A system of conduct in which the realization of the moral life is attempted by means of a complete subjugation of sensual impulse and worldly desire."—Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 74.

For a rather complete discussion of the meaning of the term in post-Platonic times, see Otto Zöckler, *Askese und Mönchtum*, pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup>*Ethical Import of Darwinism*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup>Thilly, Frank, *History of Philosophy*, p. 64. "With the Sophists Plato agrees that knowledge (of appearances) is impossible; with Socrates, that genuine knowledge is always of concepts; with Heraclitus, that the world (of appearances) is in constant change; with the Eleatics, that the world (of ideas) is unchangeable; with the Atomists, that being is plural (ideas); with the Eleatics, that it is one; with nearly all the Greek thinkers, that it is at bottom rational; with Anaxagoras that mind rules it and that mind is distinct from matter. His system is the mature fruit of the history of Greek philosophy down to his time."

<sup>4</sup>Caird, Edward, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, Vol. I, p. 78.



The age of Plato was a period of transition in the fullest sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> The older standards of thought and ideals of conduct were rapidly yielding to a rising tide of individualism. The primary assumption of the older viewpoint pictured reality as an external natural order in juxtaposition to the subjective and self-centered life of human beings. Ideas and values are somehow attached to the external order of physical objects. One immediate result of this dualism was a scepticism respecting humanistic interests and interpretations of experience. Now, the very completeness of this mechanical theory brought science to a standstill and provoked a revolt against cosmology.<sup>2</sup> Protagoras, for example, challenged the dogmatic certainty of the nature philosophers by carrying the conflict into their own field. Whence arises the certainty about the objects of external nature? We know them only from the standpoint of human perceptions. The reaction, however, proved to be the exchange of one brand of mechanism for another. For the leaders of the humanistic movement accepted the current physiological psychology, which was really the psychology implied in the older naturalistic viewpoint against which they had revolted.<sup>3</sup> In both cases, mind was conceived essentially in terms of the matter-of-fact physical organism; the extended structural aspect of experience received primary consideration.

The sceptical spirit which undermined confidence in the older mechanical view of an external natural order soon invaded the ranks of the so-called humanists. They divided into two groups. One of them retained the name 'humanist,' and the other styled itself 'naturalist.' Both assumed a naturalistic psychology. "Man is the measure of all things." *Ex hypothesi*, both schools of thought were committed to a hedonistic criterion of morals. The good is what satisfies desire, which in turn signifies the desires of the physical organism. On the one hand, 'humanists' championed the authority of νόμος, law or custom. The νόμος embodies human evaluations of experience, and is, therefore, the supreme criterion of morals. But, as some of the younger radicals observed, laws and customs are subject to change and adaptation to varying conditions. That this is true, witness the diversity of institutions

<sup>1</sup>Strong, T. B., *Platonism*, p. 8 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Burnet, John, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Gardiner, H. N., "The Psychology of the Affections in Plato and Aristotle," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 470-474. These pages contain a detailed statement of this psychology. Cf. also, Ueberweg-Heinze, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. I, p. 107 (ninth edition).

and manners among different peoples.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, certain individuals seem to be capable of instituting modifications in the laws; at length, what seems to me right, *is* right. Where there is no universal knowledge, there can be no universal natural right. Oddly enough, this attitude of subjectivity was identical with the position of the self-styled 'naturalists', though the latter came to it by a different route. The diversity of laws and customs is a direct indication that they have no sanction in nature.<sup>2</sup> Morality, so-called, is a conspiracy of the weak against the strong. Natural right is what satisfies the ambitions and desires of the strong man. From this it appears that when once the process of dissolving scepticism had set in, it invaded every province of thought. In this sceptical individualism expressed by the sophists<sup>3</sup> inheres one of the two leading incentives to Plato's ethical enquiries; the other is his theory of Ideas.<sup>4</sup>

The early attempts at bringing order out of the general chaos occasioned by the shift of interest from external nature to the spirit of man were represented by certain humanists to whom history has attached the name 'sophist.' The revolt against cosmology was what especially characterized the age of the sophists.<sup>5</sup> Then, too, for the development of ethical theory in the fifth century B. C. based upon a physiological psychology, Socrates and the sophists were chiefly responsible.<sup>6</sup> Light is thrown on this point, I believe, by the significant address of Socrates to the jury which had proposed a change of occupation as the condition of his acquittal. "Men of Athens, I respect and honor you; but I shall obey God rather than you. While I have breath and strength I

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Adam, James, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup>*Laws* X, 889 E; cf. *Prot.*, 337 D, *Gorg.*, 481 C ff.

<sup>3</sup>Nettleship, R. L., *Lectures on the Republic of Plato*, pp. 23-24. "The simplest way of describing the sophists is to say that they were persons who in the fourth and fifth centuries B. C. supplied culture to Greece, or, in other words, who made it their profession to diffuse and popularize ideas . . . Now the Greek sophists are no more to be thought of as men of a single kind than any one man is to be taken as a type of the spreaders of culture in England. The class comprized the greatest and the meanest men, men actuated by the most various motives. Some were truly interested in the spread of education, others aimed at overthrowing certain beliefs, others had no higher object in view than making a fortune."

<sup>4</sup>Bender, Wilhelm, "Metaphysik und Asketik," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. I, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Burnet, John, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>Gardiner, H. N., *Phil. Rev.* Vol. XXVII, p. 474. Also E. Caird, *Evolution of Theology*, Vol. I, p. 76.



shall never forsake philosophy, both exhorting you and directing anyone I chance to meet. And this is my accustomed manner: 'My good sir and fellow-citizen in the great city, renowned for wisdom and strength, are you not ashamed to be anxious about the greatest amount of money and reputation and honor, and at the same time neglect wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, having no appreciation of their value?' And if anyone of you disputes me and contends that you do care, I do not straightway depart, nor allow him to do so. I question and examine him, and press the matter. Whereupon, if, in my opinion, he does not possess virtue but only professes it, I reproach him for slighting the greatest values of all and for overestimating the lesser ones. I shall urge these matters upon whomsoever I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially upon citizens, because you are my kin. Believe me, it is God's command. For my part, I think that no greater good has come to you than my service to God in the state. I spend all of my time in going about and persuading young and old alike, not to take such zealous thought for their bodies and property, but to care first for the perfection of their souls. I contend that virtue is not obtained by money, but that from virtue accrues money and all the private and public goods of mankind."<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that Plato regarded certain sophists as responsible for moral opinions which are invalid. With considerable relish he tells us how two of these gentlemen had come to specialize in the teaching of morals, and who opined they could "impart virtue quicker and better than any man."<sup>2</sup> Polus, the 'illustrious' young man, regarded as "unmannerly" the imputation that the sophist Gorgias did not teach the truth about justice and the good.<sup>3</sup> Education, in the widest sense, was of the keenest interest to Greek society at that time. Plato made many allusions to the fevered excitement which prevailed at the appearance of persons who had a reputation for imparting wisdom. With what enthusiasm Hippocrates came to Socrates very early in the morning in order to obtain an introduction to Protagoras. Plato describes in considerable detail the 'train of listeners' who had come to the house of Callias<sup>4</sup> to honor Protagoras, Hippias of

<sup>1</sup>*Apology*, 29 C-30 B.

<sup>2</sup>*Euthydemus*, 273 D, also 303 D.

<sup>3</sup>*Gorg.*, 461 C.

<sup>4</sup>*Protagoras*, 310 A ff. Cf. *Laches*, 179 B ff.; *Euthyd.*, 306 D ff.

<sup>5</sup>He had spent a 'world of money' on sophists. *Apol.*, 20 A; *Cratylus*, 391 C.

Elis, and Prodicus of Ceos.<sup>1</sup> One of Plato's sharpest jibes at the sophists refers to the matter of education. They had only to whisper: "'Until you appoint us as your ministers of education, you will not be able to order your household or your state.' The people are so taken in by this wise advice that their companions all but carry the sophists about on their shoulders."<sup>2</sup> By no means does Plato give us an unbiased view of these sophists who reflect so much of public opinion. He understands their point of view, however, and in a negative way, at least, these current ethical views help to determine his own position.<sup>3</sup>

Every ethical theory represents a fairly consistent and honest attempt to discover an objective and dependable standard of the morally good act. The two large groups of moralists with which Plato had to deal are no exceptions on this point. The defenders of conventional moral ideas (*νόμος*) and the adherents of natural morality (*φύσις*) are at one in loosely identifying the good and the pleasant. The former group is typified by Protagoras in the Dialogue that bears his name, the latter by Calicles in the *Gorgias*. These two schools had crystallized into words a fluid mass of current opinion. Plato soon recognized in the familiar catch-words of popular opinion the expression of an exaggerated individualism which would make moral theory and practise impossible. Moral ideas were much akin to our 'wandering adjectives' which flit about at will; they were, moreover, veritable sons of Proteus.<sup>4</sup> Plato proposed to come to terms with current moral notions by insisting that a single meaning be adhered to, and then pressing the consequences with relentless logic.<sup>5</sup>

#### I. CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

A. Perhaps, the simplest approach to Plato's ethical problem is found in the popular view represented by Polemarchus in the *Republic*.<sup>6</sup> The son inherits the argument from Cephalus, his father. This represents the transition point from the proverbial stage, where moral wisdom is summed up in terse epigrammatic formu-

<sup>1</sup>*Prot.*, 315 A ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* X, 600 D.

<sup>3</sup>*Philosophical Remains of Richard Lewis Nettleship* (edited by A. C. Bradley, 2nd. ed.), p. 240 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Crat.*, 384 D, E, 385 B, D.

<sup>5</sup>Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 243.

<sup>6</sup>Here we adopt the view that the *Republic*, Books I and II, through 367 E, logically belong to the early Socratic group.



lae.<sup>1</sup> With Cephalus, morality is 'to be true in word and deed, and to pay one's debts to gods and men.' Polemarchus is the unreflective and defenseless modern. Still, that does not daunt him from coming forward in a confident manner to answer the question: What is justice<sup>2</sup> or morality? Perforce, his reply is hearsay opinion. This is Plato's opportunity to set forth the worthlessness of the unexamined life.<sup>3</sup> The youth glibly delivers himself of a definition from Simonides, the poet. Justice is the rendering to each one what is due (*τὸ ὀφειλόμενον*).<sup>4</sup> Gradually Socrates drives Polemarchus to the admission that he does not know in the least what is meant by the quotation; that he is at the mercy of anyone who can manipulate terms better than he, and that his words can be made to mean quite the contrary of what he intended. And yet, our moralist is not convinced of the absurdity of his position. He is confused and at a loss about what he has been saying. Still, he is ready to sally forth on the admission that justice is 'to do good to friends and harm to enemies.'<sup>5</sup> This was a commonplace in Greek popular morality.<sup>6</sup> On this basis, the moral act depends not upon virtue itself, but upon the external ends of advantage or pleasure.<sup>7</sup> This means to plant the caprice of the individual at the heart of morality, and, as Plato says, to love virtue for the sake of vice.<sup>8</sup> Again Socrates banters his apt pupil and gains the verbal admission that such a notion is inconsistent with the most elementary morality. Either Simonides did not uphold such a doctrine or he was aligned on the side of falsehood.<sup>9</sup>

The foregoing gives a fairly definite conception of Plato's attitude toward this phase of commonsense morality. Elsewhere we see how persistently he belabors uncritical moral opinion on account of its smug self-satisfaction. Until the apathy of ignorance is punctured, progress is out of the question. The disciple carried on the Socratic mission. In the *Apology* Socrates ascribes his seeming popularity to the delight furnished his auditors while cross-

<sup>1</sup>*Prot.*, 343 B, 341 C.

<sup>2</sup>Justice, in the Platonic Dialogues, is used in the sense of morality in general, and also of the particular virtue, justice.

<sup>3</sup>*Apol.*, 38 A. ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* I, 331 E.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* I, 334 B.

<sup>6</sup>*Meno*, 71 E.

<sup>7</sup>Zeller, *E., Plato and the Older Academy*, p. 182.

<sup>8</sup>*Phaedo*, 68 D-E, 82 C; *Rep.* II, 362 E, 365 A; VI, 492 A ff.

<sup>9</sup>*Rep.* I, 335 E-336 A.

examining pretenders at wisdom.<sup>1</sup> The effect of this procedure upon those examined provoked enmity which threatened his destruction, and had laid hold upon "many others, and good men too."<sup>2</sup> The conceit of knowledge is the most disgraceful brand of ignorance, the source of the greatest evils. Especially is this true when it refers to the greatest matters: the just, the good, the noble, and the advantageous.<sup>3</sup> Self-deception is the 'lie in the soul.' "Ignorance in the soul of the one who is deceived is what may be called the true lie. This follows from the fact that the verbal lie is a sort of imitation and a shadowy image of an affection in the soul; it is not a simon-pure lie."<sup>4</sup> Alcibiades is well aware that the Athenians and the other Hellenes do not often advise about the just and the unjust; they assume that such notions are perfectly clear.<sup>5</sup> The Dialogue closes when the youth is divested of his haughty self-satisfaction.<sup>6</sup>

B. Nettleship says that in his first attempts to define the knowledge upon which human goodness and well-being depends, Plato was as much concerned to see what it was not, and how it differed from other kinds of knowledge, as to see what it was and how it resembled them.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, he made distinctions respecting the levels of common sense morality. There are persons who do little thinking on their own account, but who lack the confident attitude of Polemarchus.<sup>8</sup> Like him, they accept conventional moral ideas. They differ from his type in that they accept custom as the arbiter of morals without a confirmed sense of its finality; they do so rather from a vague feeling that it is the natural thing to do, the alternative of complete helplessness. This second type of conventional thought, however, is indefinite and subject to confusion, the retreat of hazy notions. The Socratic method elicited from it three types of error. The first is the mistake of substituting particular instances of moral conduct for an account of the whole nature of morality. True to the form of unreflective mind, Laches affirms without hesitation that the virtue of courage is fully illustrated by the man who stays at his post, wards off enemies, and does not flee.<sup>9</sup> Or, repeating the same type of error, he defines courage as a sort of endurance of the soul.<sup>10</sup> This is the substitution of a single general quality of moral acts for the whole

<sup>1</sup>33 C.

<sup>2</sup>*Apol.*, 28 A.

<sup>3</sup>*Alcibiades* I, 118 A-B.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* II, 382 B; cf. *Crat.*, 428 D.

<sup>5</sup>*Alcib.* I, 113 D.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 135 D-E.

<sup>7</sup>*Remains*, p. 250.

<sup>8</sup>*Lysis*, 218 A.

<sup>9</sup>*Laches*, 190 E.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 192 B.



virtue.<sup>1</sup> The second way in which uncritical common sense obscures morality is by describing merely how virtue differs in different circumstances. "There is one virtue of youth, male and female, and another virtue for old age; and, if you like, another kind for freemen, and another for slaves. Virtues are of vast variety, so that there is no lack of definitions. For virtue is relative to each act and age, it varies with each deed and person. Methinks, the same is true of vice, Socrates."<sup>2</sup> Such generosity is not appreciated by Socrates. He asked for the definition of a single virtue, and Meno delivered a 'swarm of them.'<sup>3</sup> Socrates wants virtue<sup>4</sup> (*ἀρετή*) delivered to him in its universal aspect. "Leave off making a multiple from a unity, as the facetious say to those who break up a thing, and present virtue as it is, whole and sound."<sup>5</sup> Whereupon, a third and most common confusion comes to view. The principle of virtue is not distinguished from its external and more or less incidental conditions and results. For example, virtue is defined as the desire and attainment of the honorable.<sup>6</sup> The same fallacy is illustrated when piety is defined as "what the gods love."<sup>7</sup>

At first, it seems difficult to realize that Plato is serious in dealing with these conceptions of the good. The confusions seem so obvious, and dramatic byplay overspreads so much of the discussion. There are two reasons, however, for thinking that Plato was much in earnest. In the first place, he showed how readily the adherents of popular moral ideas became the victims of the semi-professional sophists. The art of the latter resembled the double turn of an expert dancer; these dialectical jugglers wrought endless confusion in the minds of persons who based their morals upon hearsay opinion.<sup>8</sup> In the second place, the common sense view which assumed that somehow knowledge is the primary condition of virtue is in the border-land of the Socratic morality

<sup>1</sup> *Charmides*, 158 B, 160 C, 161 B; *Meno*, 73 C.

<sup>2</sup> *Meno*, 71 E-72 A.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 72 A.

<sup>4</sup> "The Greek word *ἀρετή*, the most comprehensive term for admirable qualities of character, is usually rendered by 'virtue.' It is unfortunate that the English word has undergone the process of attenuation and decay, so familiar in the history of language, by which any special meaning which it had has shrunk into equivalence with chastity, while the general approbation which it expresses has evaporated into a praise so faint that it almost damns." Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> *Meno*, 77 A.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 77 B, 78 C.

<sup>7</sup> *Euthyphro*, 6 E.

<sup>8</sup> *Euthyphro*, 286 D, 283 D, 284 C, *et passim*.

where knowledge is virtue.<sup>1</sup> And the Platonic Socrates was very sympathetic with the popular attempt to identify the virtues with some kind of knowledge. On common ground with the intelligence of his day, Critias was content to define temperance (*σωφροσύνη*) as self-knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Self-knowledge prepares the individual for progress in valid learning, and also enables him to test the knowledge of other persons.<sup>3</sup> Socrates had often affirmed: "Every man is good in what things he is wise, and bad in what he is unlearned;" and so Nicias infers that courage is a kind of *σοφία*.<sup>4</sup> All men trust us where knowledge is our guide; knowledge is the basis of friendship between men.<sup>5</sup> The deplorable condition of Athenian youth consisted in the fact that it lacked knowledge in the important affairs of justice.<sup>6</sup> In default of knowledge in matters of virtue all men are helpless.<sup>7</sup> It is better to err voluntarily than to be without knowledge, "if, indeed, there is such a man."<sup>8</sup> The refrain of the *Menexenus* is: "Sons of the glorious Athenian state, get knowledge and virtue!"<sup>9</sup> All men desire the good,<sup>10</sup> but do they know what it is? Gods and men all agree that justice be done, but what is justice?<sup>11</sup> Plainly, the obligation resting upon every man is "in every way to exercise care how he may become the wisest possible."<sup>12</sup>

In the last analysis, however, agreement with the common sense viewpoint in morals is more apparent than real. The whole tenor of the earlier Dialogues shows the inadequacy of popular knowledge to furnish a rational basis for conduct. *On his own account*, Socrates did not lament the negative result of the investigation of temperance or wisdom.<sup>13</sup> Still, as he ironically adds, it is too bad that Charmides, "so fair in form and wise in soul will have no profit or advantage in life from his temperance."<sup>14</sup> Deficiency in knowledge will make Socrates and his companions the laughing stock of bystanders. "They will say that we depart thinking that we are mutual friends—I consider myself in your company—but

<sup>1</sup> Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 116, suggests that the silence of the earlier Dialogues upon pre-Socratic philosophies proceeded from a desire to ground his readers thoroughly on the Socratic foundation, before introducing more advanced considerations.

<sup>2</sup> *Charm.*, 164 E, 165 B, 167 A, 172 A.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 172 B.

<sup>4</sup> *Laches*, 193 A, 194 D, 199 B.

<sup>5</sup> *Lysis*, 209 C, 210 B, D.

<sup>6</sup> *Alcib.* I, 112 A, 122 C, 124 A, 129 A.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 133 C.

<sup>8</sup> *Hippias* I, 376 B.

<sup>9</sup> *Menex.*, 247 D.

<sup>10</sup> *Meno*, 77 B, E, 78 A; *Euthyd.*, 288 E, *et passim*.

<sup>11</sup> *Euthyphro*, 8 D.

<sup>12</sup> *Euthyd.*, 282 A.

<sup>13</sup> *Charm.*, 175 D.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 175 D-E.



what friendship is we have not yet discerned."<sup>1</sup> The dream of universal knowledge might indeed make us expert in various arts, but it is deficient in what enables us to attain our welfare (*εὖ πράττειν*) and be happy.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion of that 'inconclusive' study of wisdom or temperance is that the argument has gone out of its way to show the futility of a 'universal knowledge'.<sup>3</sup>

C. We come, then, to a formidable problem. Popular thought lacked the knowledge which virtue or goodness seems to demand. Nor does Socrates seem able to supply the want. Is there something about this demand which is unreasonable? Perhaps it is time to question the original assumption that virtue is one, and that knowledge is its principle of unity.<sup>4</sup> After all, is virtue one or many? There was a third and more critical type of conventional thought which presumed to have answered this question. Therefore, Plato went directly to one of the chief exponents of public opinion, to Protagoras himself.<sup>5</sup> The discussion falls into two main divisions. In the first part Protagoras re-affirms the unity of virtue in knowledge. And at this point Plato casts further doubt upon the Socratic abstract conception of what constitutes knowledge. Protagoras refused to admit the revelancy of the objection implied in the behaviour of the Athenian assembly. On technical questions such as ship-building, only the advice of experts is admitted; whereas, in affairs of state everyone is free to have a say, carpenter, tinker, cobbler, sailor, passenger—all, rich and poor, high and low.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the teachableness of virtue is not invalidated by the fact that the wisest and best statesmen do not impart their political virtue to others.<sup>7</sup>

Protagoras now proceeds in detail to controvert these arguments. First of all the art of good citizenship differs from all others in that it is not the possession of a few professional men. Temperance and justice, unlike matters of technical skill, are common to all men, and this makes the conduct of the Athenian assembly very natural.<sup>8</sup> The existence of society depends upon the presence of these virtues. Hence Zeus gave the command: "The man who is not able to share reverence and justice must be put to death as the plague of

<sup>1</sup>*Lysis*, 223 B; cf. *Alcib.* I, 127 D.

<sup>2</sup>*Charm.*, 173 D.

<sup>3</sup>*Nettleship, Remains*, p. 255; Burnet, *Op. cit.*, p. 117. This is not the place to inquire into the detailed doctrines of the historical Protagoras. It suffices to note that Plato makes him the spokesman of public opinion at its best.

<sup>4</sup>*Prot.*, 319 D.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 323 A.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 175 D.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Laches*, 199 D.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 319 E.

the state."<sup>1</sup> Additional proof is furnished by the common notion that every person should profess virtue or justice whether or not he really has it. The inference is that otherwise he should not be at large in the world.<sup>2</sup> On the surface, this section of the argument runs counter to Protagoras's thesis that virtue is teachable. The deeper import of it, I am convinced, is a covert attack upon the abstract character of the knowledge which Socrates submits as the sole basis for morality. No man, so far as Socrates could discover, possessed such knowledge. And yet, justice and temperance are the very cornerstones of social life. In the second place, society has instituted a scheme of punishments to promote justice or morality, and this indicates that virtue is not a gift of nature, neither does it grow spontaneously.<sup>3</sup> Always, its presence is the result of training.<sup>4</sup> In so far as men regard one another as the victims of evil by nature or by misfortune, they can only pity the sufferer; no one is angry, or chides, or instructs, or punishes the victims. But the case is quite otherwise with those disciplines acquired by training, practice, or instruction.<sup>5</sup> A third proof that virtue is teachable at the fact that everybody does teach it. The truth is: "Beginning with early childhood, until the very end of life, people do teach and admonish. As soon as the child understands at all what is being said, nurse and mother, tutor and father, vie with each other in making the best child possible. They teach and point out each particular deed and word: this is just, that is unjust, this is holy, that is unholy; do these things, abstain from those."<sup>6</sup> At the age of maturity, the laws prescribe their manner of life.<sup>7</sup> What is all this but teaching virtue? "If goodness were not teachable, that were more remarkable."<sup>8</sup> Finally, the fact that the sons of good men do not turn out well always, is beside the mark. The same is true with the other arts. For all that, and here the humanist is eloquent: "I would have you consider that he whom you adjudge to be the most unjust of all those nurtured by the laws and institutions of civilized society is really a just man and a promoter of justice compared with men who lack education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any agency which constrains them toward the practice of virtue—with the savages, for instance, whom Pherecrates displayed last year at the Lenaeon festival. Had you actually lived in a society such as the man-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 322 D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 323 B.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 324 B-C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 323 C.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 323 D-E.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 325 C-D.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 326 C.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 326 E.



haters in his chorus, you would be delighted to associate with Eurybates and Phrynondas, and longingly would your soul yearn for the depravity of this community."<sup>1</sup>

Such an array of evidence is quite convincing. And so Socrates wanted to know whether or not Protagoras has the knowledge upon which this teaching is based. If virtue can be taught, what is it? In what follows, Socrates takes affairs into his own hands. In this second section of the argument, Socrates brings out the problem unsolved by common sense moralists by reversing his own position and by inducing Protagoras to do the same.<sup>2</sup> Socrates launched the argument with the old question: Is virtue one, or many?<sup>3</sup> All along the common assumption has been that morality has some principle of coherence. Otherwise, it could not have a social and dependable character. The subject-matter of the arts has a kind of unity. Moreover, the good artist is one who knows the theory of his art. What Socrates wants to know is: Does Protagoras understand the rational basis upon which morality rests? The investigation soon reveals in him the same want of depth and consistency which ordinary common sense displays. The teacher is as much at sea as those whom he would enlighten. His thought is superficial and his terms are blindly applied. He affirms the abstract heterogeneity of the virtues<sup>4</sup> in contradiction to his original position.<sup>5</sup> Wisdom and temperance are now opposites, and again closely related; all of which amounts to saying that a man can be virtuous in his vice.<sup>6</sup> The fatal weakness of the whole common sense standpoint now comes to light; it is unable to make any salient distinctions. The following passage shows its dependence upon external and incidental considerations. "Well, then, justice bears some resemblance to holiness; the reason is that everything, from some point of view and at the same time, resembles every other thing. White is, in a certain way, like black, hard is like soft, and the most extreme opposites have something in common; even the parts of the face, which we noted a while ago as having different functions and the one part unlike the other, in some respects resemble each other."<sup>7</sup>

In the first section of the Dialogue, Protagoras had adduced no mean arguments in opposition to the Socratic demand for a certain kind of knowledge as the basis of virtue or goodness. Now

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 327 C-D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 361 A ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 329 C.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 331 D. Cf. also *Ibid.*, 333 E; *Euthyd.*, 303 D.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 330 B, 350 C.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 329 C.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 333 C-D, 333 B.

the table is turned, and Socrates shows the impotence of the sort of knowledge accepted by this learned teacher of morals. Protagoras gives himself the air of wisdom over ordinary opinion. He does not identify the good and the pleasant in the same naive way.<sup>1</sup> But when his memory grows faint on this opinion, the good is, after all, the pleasant and the evil is what is painful.<sup>2</sup> This criterion in morals follows from his acceptance of the current position that all knowledge is sense-knowledge. Vainly, then, does he protest that knowledge is moral power.<sup>3</sup> Now the rest of the world has a sickly opinion about knowledge; men say that a man may have knowledge, and yet that knowledge may be overmastered by anger, or pleasure, or pain, or love, or perhaps by fear,—just as if knowledge were the slave of the bodily senses and might be dragged about in any way. Protagoras, on the contrary, holds that knowledge "is a noble and commanding agency, and if one really knows the good and the evil, one cannot be overpowered so as to do the contrary of what knowledge bids. Wisdom has the ability to aid mankind." But this is contrary to the admission that good and evil are determined by sensations of pleasure and pain. If these words are more than an idle boast, Protagoras has reached an *impasse*. One cannot forsake the doctrine that knowledge is perception and continue to identify the good with the pleasant. Plato elaborates the contradiction: "For if this is true, then the argument is absurd which affirms that a man often knowingly does what is evil, and that he does these things, when he might abstain, because he is seduced and overpowered by pleasure; or again, when you say that a person knowingly refuses to do what is good because he is, on the spur of the moment, overcome by pleasure. And that these alternatives are ridiculous will become evident, unless we confuse various terms, such as pleasant and painful, good and evil."<sup>4</sup> It is like saying that a man does what is bad, knowing it to be so, under the influence of what is good; or again, that he does what is less pleasant, knowing it to be so, under the influence of what is more pleasant.<sup>5</sup> The hedonist, Plato thinks, is a psychological determinist; the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain is the law of human nature. There ends the story. In the last analysis, Protagoras must agree with common sense that knowledge is perception. Such knowledge can be modified only in one direction, by the invention of a more accurate

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 351 D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 354 C-D, 358 A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 352 B-C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 355 A-B.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 366 A.



means of calculating pleasure and pain. Likewise, moral failure can be explained solely as miscalculation in pleasure and pain.<sup>1</sup> Socrates was right. If one accepts the hedonistic assumption about the nature of knowledge which is involved in the identification of the good and the pleasant, the measuring art (*μετρητική τέχνη*) is the salvation of human life.<sup>2</sup> And now the familiar dictum that wrong-doing has its source in ignorance, becomes a double-edged sword. Protagoras lacks the rational knowledge to which he had laid claim, and also the calculating art required to make his sentient criterion of morals most effective.

It is plain that the ideal of a *μετρητική τέχνη* is an advance upon the uncritical standpoint of Protagoras. It marks a refinement upon the rough-and-ready calculation advocated, for example, by the founder of the Cyrenaic school, who was, in fact, Protagoras's logical successor. Aristippus reduced all knowledge to an awareness of sensations, and made immediate gratification the end of life. Protagoras would, doubtless, have objected to the last principle, but it is only an extension of his views; the history of ethics shows that Hedonism is constantly associated with sensationalism. The theory that knowledge is built up primarily out of bodily feelings has an elective affinity for the notion that action is, or ought to be, determined in the last resort by the most prominent feelings, pleasure and pain.<sup>3</sup> It is this feature implied in the Protagorean theory which loomed large before Plato's thought, and which, if we may anticipate, led him to reject the calculating art. It is true that the pleasure-pain criterion supplies a provisional rule-of-thumb method of ethics, which with the aid of a calculus might become very effective. Plato's preferences, however, lay in another direction. This type of hedonism seemed to veer too much in the direction of the Heraclitean flux. Did Plato doubt the power of sense-knowledge to introduce the organization, the order and coherence, which the social character of morality implies? The savants maintain that virtue is the bond of unity pervading the world, and for that reason it is a cosmos, not disorder and misrule.<sup>4</sup> Reality, then, is rational and its

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 357 E, 358 C-D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 356 D-357 B.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Hobbes, *Human Nature*, Chapter VII, section 3. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter XX, Section 2-3. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Of Morals, Part I, section I; also part III, Section I.

<sup>4</sup>*Gorg.*, 508 A.

principles are knowable. Experience warrants so much, as an hypothesis. Indeed, that is the deeper import of all the manifold variety of current ethical opinions. We are driven again to the old question: What is the nature of that knowledge which is the basis of virtue, of *ἀρετή*?

## 2. NATURAL MORALITY

Plato was acquainted with two rather completely formulated naturalistic theories of the good whose advocates presumed to have answered the above question. There were the out-and-out protagonists of the natural right theory, and those who regarded morality as an enforced compromise with the law of nature. Plato leads us to think that both the 'natural right' and the 'conventional right' moralists are more keen and daring than the champions of common sense morality with whom we have been dealing; they are, moreover, agreed with the latter in holding that the good is what satisfies desire, which, in the last analysis, meant for them that the good is the pleasant. Their standard of the morally good life is from Plato's point of view the same, only they came to it by different routes.

A. Naturalistic ethics began with the maxim 'follow nature.'<sup>1</sup> Hippias of Elis seems to have been the first to emphasize the antithesis between nature (*φύσις*) and convention (*νόμος*, combining the senses of 'law' and 'convention') in its ethical bearing. It was this antithesis which divided the ranks of the current sophistic ethicists.<sup>2</sup> Plato introduces Hippias as the protagonist of natural law. He addressed the assembled group as follows: "I presume that you are all kinsmen and friends and fellow-citizens by nature, not by law. For by nature like is akin to like, but law is the tyrant of mankind and forces many things contrary to nature."<sup>3</sup> Two salient ideas are here expressed: nature is the moral guide, and it is opposed to convention. Apparently the speaker was much annoyed by the motley variety of customs among different peoples. He appeared once at the Olympian games in the character of a universal genius who made everything which he wore.<sup>4</sup> Thus did he declare the superiority of nature over civilization. It is

<sup>1</sup>This fluctuates in meaning from 'Do not fall below the brutes' to 'Be reasonable.'

<sup>2</sup>Benn, A. W., *Greek Philosophers*, Vol. I, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>*Prot.*, 337 D.

<sup>4</sup>*Hippias Minor*, 368 B-C. Also Theodor Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, (translation by Berry & Magnus) Vol. I, p. 431.



said that in order to discover the natural rule of right he compared the laws of different nations and selected those common to all as the basis of an ethical system.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of these older defenders of the régime of nature appears to have been the establishment of a more complete equality among men. Plato concerns himself with showing that the younger set of Athenians utilized this antithesis of nature and convention for opposite purposes. At its worst, it became an argument for despotism. In the Dialogues, this position is advocated by Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and by Calicles in the *Gorgias*. It is the latter who states in its most bare-faced and cynical form the doctrine that morality is a means to what gives pleasure. "Tell me, Socrates, are you in earnest or only jesting? For if you really mean what you say, and these things are true, as you aver they are, what else can it mean than that our whole view of life has been turned upside down? We are, it seems, doing everything just the opposite from what we ought."<sup>2</sup> Or again, "In fact, Socrates, although you are by profession seeking the truth, you have recourse to popular and vulgar notions of right; they are indeed sanctioned by custom, but not by nature. For the most part, nature and law are opposed to each other."<sup>3</sup> Morality, so-called, is just the conspiracy of the naturally unfit. "I think the makers of the law are weaklings who despise the majority. And so, in behalf of themselves, they establish the laws and mete out praise and blame to their own advantage. They intimidate the bolder types of men and those who are able to gain more, in order that these may not exercise their power; they designate the gaining of a larger share (τὸ πλεονεκτεῖν),<sup>4</sup> shameful and unjust. To seek to have more than one's neighbors is the practice of injustice. For it seems to me that this paltry crowd dotes on equality. This is the reason why it is conventionally held shameful and unjust to endeavor to have more than other people. Now that is all they mean by injustice. Whereas, it seems to me that nature herself declares otherwise: it is right for the better to have more than the worse, the stronger than the weaker. The truth of this is evidenced by many examples both in the animal kingdom, and in whole cities and races of men. Justice consists in the stronger class ruling and possessing more than the inferior. Was not this the type of justice which Xerxes employed in his invasion of Hellas, and which his father used against the Scythians? There is no need of multiplying

<sup>1</sup>Xenophon, *Memorabilia*. IV, iv, 19.

<sup>2</sup>*Gorg.*, 481 C; cf. *Rep.* I, 348 E-349 A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 482 E.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *Rep.* II, 359 A-B.

such examples. But surely these are men who follow natural right in such matters; yes, by Zeus, the very law of nature, although it probably is not the kind of law which we establish."<sup>1</sup> Our 'moral society' curbs the strength of the best and boldest types of youth by dinning into their ears "equality must reign, and this is noble and just. But I surmise that if there should emerge an individual with sufficient might, he would tear asunder these bonds and gain freedom, and trample under foot our forms and charms and all our provisions and the laws contrary to nature; our slave would rise up and show himself as master, and then the justice of nature would shine forth."<sup>2</sup>

Your 'temperate man' is really a fool, for how can a man be happy who is a slave of anything? "On the contrary, the naturally good and just life, I confidently assert, is this: The one who is truly going to live must allow his desires to expand to the limit, and not chastise them; and when they have grown to their full capacity, he must have the daring and wisdom to serve them and to satisfy all of his longings. Of course, I admit, this is not within the reach of the majority. Therefore they censure the strong men, in the effort to conceal their weakness, because they are ashamed of it. Concupiscence is by them pronounced a disgrace. Wherefore, as I have already remarked, they enslave the men who are better by nature; and being unable to go ahead to the satisfaction of their own pleasures, they praise self-restraint (σωφροσύνη) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) out of their own cowardice."<sup>3</sup> "Granted the power to obtain them, luxury and intemperance and license are virtue and happiness; all these other things are tawdry externals, agreements contrary to nature, mere babble and nothing worth."<sup>4</sup> The life without pleasure and passion is the life of a stone.<sup>5</sup>

Calicles has omitted nothing which Plato's art could supply in the naked identification of the good and the pleasant. The true end of life is to satisfy desire, and without discrimination or hindrance. As Thrasymachus puts it: 'Justice is the interest of the stronger.'<sup>6</sup> Successful self-aggrandizement supplies the true aim of human endeavor. Whereas Plato has usually found something commendable in the ethical theories reviewed so far, in the *Gorgias* he repudiates without qualification the individualistic and anarchistic naturalism of his opponents. The very boldness of these sophistic exponents of naturalism enabled him to set forth

<sup>1</sup>*Gorg.*, 483 B-E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 484 A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 491 E-492 A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 492 C; cf. *Rep.* I, 348 E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 492 E, 494 A.

<sup>6</sup>*Rep.* I, 347 E.



more clearly than heretofore his most fundamental and characteristic idea, that the moral life is the rational life.<sup>1</sup> He saw that successful selfishness is logically self-destructive and therefore immoral. Nowhere is the power of contrast more effectively used by Plato than in the explication of this position. On this point the remark of Nettleship is pertinent. "Nowhere are we so vividly reminded of the Biblical antithesis between sin and righteousness, the flesh and the spirit; nowhere does the 'love of wisdom' seem to come so near to the 'love of God.' Yet nowhere else is Plato more himself. The opposition of his enemy is not drowned in denunciatory thunders, or absorbed in a personal assurance of salvation; the concentrated eloquence and relentless logic with which he upholds the cause of right and truth are met by the champion of pleasure and power with language as forcible and conviction as unbending; and under their expressions of irony or contempt there are not wanting gleams of mutual admiration and pity."<sup>2</sup>

The advocates of the life of complete satisfaction of desire in terms of pleasure based their claims upon three major contentions. First, the life of successful self-interest is true wisdom (*σοφία*). Secondly, the life which conventional morality designates unjust is the life of strength (*ισχύς*). Finally, the unjust life is the life of virtue (*ἀρετή*), and therefore the life of happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*).<sup>3</sup>

Plato's controversy with the naturalists on these points proceeds not only by making counter-claims, but also by showing that the theory in question rests upon a superficial interpretation of experience, that a thoroughgoing application of its principles would entail the abandonment of a human mode of living. Consider first the contention that injustice is the true wisdom of life. Now, the central idea of injustice is traditionally understood to be *πλεονεξία*, the desire to get more than anybody else of good things.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the essence of injustice is the insatiable impulse to overreach all limitations and to overstep recognized boundaries. Thrasymachus defines the most perfect injustice as "the tyranny, which by fraud and force takes away the property of others—things sacred and profane, public and private—not by dribbles, but wholesale."<sup>5</sup> The social application of this notion means tyranny, and Plato hastens to say that tyranny wherever found is self-destructive. The tyrant naturally hates both his superiors and his inferiors, and, consequently, isolates himself from all human

<sup>1</sup>Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 279–280.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* I, 348 E–349 A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* I, 349 B; *Gorg.*, 483 B.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* I, 343 E–344 A.

contacts.<sup>1</sup> Hated by all men, a slave to his own whims, the tyrant resembles a paralytic who must pass his days fighting other men.<sup>2</sup> The older Athenian statesmen were headed in this direction. They were adepts in pampering the desire of the populace; they filled the city with harbors, docks, walls, and revenues, and neglected the weightier matters of temperance and justice.<sup>3</sup> The great Pericles by his system of payments made the citizens cowardly babblers and idle lovers of talk; and when they became 'noble and good,' at the very end of his life, they convicted him of theft and almost pronounced upon him the death sentence.<sup>4</sup> How can it be maintained that such a life embodies wisdom?

Plato always conceives the life of sensibility *per se* as that part of human nature which tends to establish the despotism of a particular desire, a despotism which carries within itself the seeds of dissolution. Its principle is the denial of all principle. For this reason the ideal life described by Callicles in the completely unjust man<sup>5</sup> seemed to Socrates to be a kind of living death. As Euripides says: "Who knows . . . ?" It may be that we are really dead.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, certain wise men believe that our body (*σῶμα*) is our tomb (*σῆμα*). That part of the soul in which desire lives is readily tossed up and down, and so a brilliant inventor of tales (probably a Sicilian or Italian) punned a bit and said: 'Because of its credulous and persuasive character the soul is a vessel.'<sup>7</sup> He compared the appetitive part of the soul, that is, the soul of an ignorant man, to a perforated vessel. The life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure is typically ignorant because it lacks perspective. It cannot see life as a whole, because it is momentarily absorbed in the transient particulars of sense. In the figure such a life is compared with a person carrying water in a leaky vessel and pouring it into a sieve.<sup>8</sup> For the value of such a life of pleasure depends upon the superabundance of inflow. Now Socrates adjudges such to be the life of a cormorant and not of a human being.<sup>9</sup> Inordinate desire, wherever found, is the sign of disease and not of health. Injustice, then, is colossal ignorance.

On the contrary, order and regularity is a good wherever found. The good man speaks and acts with reference to the best; his life

<sup>1</sup>*Gorg.*, 510 B ff. Cf. *Rep.* VIII, 568 A; IX, 572 B ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* IX, 579 C.

<sup>3</sup>*Gorg.*, 519 A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 515 E–516 A.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 491 E ff. Cf. *Rep.* I, 344 B–C.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 493 A.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 493 A. διὰ τὸ πιθανόν . . . πειστικόν . . . πιθανόν.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 493 A–B.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 494 B.



is not a series of chance expressions at various moments. He has a standard.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle explains that the original use of σοφία indicated the virtue of τέχνη, art in the widest sense of the word.<sup>2</sup> Every art is constituted by a principle of arrangement, whereby the several parts are made to accord with the plan of the whole. Therefore, the wise man is he who understands the art of living,<sup>3</sup> and the unjust man fails at this vital point. He spends his strength trying to build up a happy life from particular pleasures, each one of which claims to be self-complete and independent of every other. The case is the opposite with the wise man. He begins with the idea of the whole, more or less definitely formulated, and he adjusts the parts as elements within it. Particular objects of desire are estimated in terms of an organic relationship to the good life as a whole; he applies the principle of the 'limit' (πέρας). For Plato the terms 'limit' (πέρας) and 'measure' or 'proportion' (μέτρον) convey important meanings. Anything is measured which has proportion between its parts, and this internal organization indicates a harmony, a wholesome order.<sup>4</sup> This is the great principle which holds the universe together.<sup>5</sup> Law, in the sense of measure or limit, is synonymous with internal organization and undeviating mode of activity. It is this idea which Plato applies to the moral life. Wisdom, stability, and a harmonious relation of parts is the symbol of reason everywhere.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of the limit or measure as the work of reason is fundamental in Plato's conception of morality. It means nothing less than a far-reaching modification in ethical method. Here Plato is insisting, in opposition to the measuring art of the Protagoras, that the organization of moral experience is to come not from any refinement upon sensibility, but from a different principle, from reason, the source of universal law. Experience is no longer conceived as a mass of discrete sense perceptions which may somehow be arranged like the pieces of a puzzle-picture. Reason, the universal principle of the 'limit', is the organizing power upon which a wise and strong and healthy order depends. Morality does not subsist upon those material goods which give pleasure, but primarily upon a principle immanent in all experience, with a power (δύναμις) all its own. Accordingly, when Plato argues that the just man is the wise man, he shows by implication that justice alone maintains the strength and well-being of life. In the second

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 503 D-504 B.

<sup>2</sup>Eth. Nic. VI, vii, 1.

<sup>3</sup>Cicero applies the phrase *ars vivendi*.

<sup>4</sup>Polit., 283 C ff.

<sup>5</sup>Gorg., 507 E; Phileb., 25 E ff.

<sup>6</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 39.

and third sections of the discussion, he goes on to point out that the champions of injustice unwittingly recognize the universal principle of reason. Polus wrecks his argument when he admits that to do injustice is more shameful (αἰσχρὸν) (morally reprehensible), although to suffer it is more evil (κάκιον), i. e., more painful.<sup>1</sup> Thrasymachus is forced to admit that every group succeeds in its injustice just so far as it makes implicit acknowledgement of justice. That holds true even of a band of robbers. Without such an internal principle of order, dissolution must ensue through incapacity to act together. "The power of injustice is of such a nature that wherever it is present, in a city, or a family, or an army, or any other body, that body is, first of all, rendered incapable of united action by reason of sedition and distraction; moreover, it is at enmity with itself, with everything which opposes it, and with the just."<sup>2</sup> The tyrant cannot secure the real, but only the apparent object of his desire, because he lacks knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Doing what one 'fancies' is not great power; one who employs power under the illusion of ignorance is rather to be pitied.<sup>4</sup> Injustice is ignorance and weakness. Two antithetical methods in ethics are here set before us. The following passage from Nettleship emphasizes the nature of that opposition. "Here we have a transition from the view of justice as a matter of external conduct to the view of it as a living principle in the human soul which works itself out in the conduct of life. This is the first indication of the manner of looking at the subject which dominates the whole of the rest of the *Republic*. The principle of absolute injustice means the impossibility of union with oneself, with other men, and with God; and wherever strength is found, it is in virtue of some admixture of justice or unity."<sup>5</sup> Injustice is ignorance and weakness.

It follows, too, that the unjust life is the unhappy life. Virtue in Greek thought is that quality of the agent which enables him to perform his function well. The life, therefore, which is wisely ordered and can make a right use of its power is *ipso facto* virtuous. Justice is the power peculiar to the soul of man, and the power by which he can attain his welfare and be happy.<sup>6</sup> On this basis Plato is prepared to maintain the apparent paradox that it is better to

<sup>1</sup>Gorg., 474 C, 482 D; cf. 469 B, 475 C, D, E.

<sup>2</sup>Rep. I, 351 E-352 A; cf. Gorg., 507 C-E.

<sup>3</sup>Gorg., 466 D, 468 D.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 468 E, 469 B, E; cf., 461 A, 482 D.

<sup>5</sup>Lectures, p. 41; cf. Rep. I, 352 B, ff.

<sup>6</sup>Rep. I, 353 D-354 A.



suffer injustice than to do it,<sup>1</sup> and if one does injustice one should wish to be punished for it, and not to escape; for injustice is the vice of the soul, and punishment is the means for eradicating the disease.<sup>2</sup> Happiest of all is he who has never had vice in his soul, and the next happiest is he who has been justly punished and straightened in his conduct.<sup>3</sup> Only the just man can live well and be happy.<sup>4</sup> Can it be that *happiness* is as far removed from *pleasure* as is the life of the man who is just and wise and strong from the life of him who is unjust and ignorant and weak? At any rate, the good is not to be identified with the pleasant, but the pleasant is to be pursued for the sake of the good.<sup>5</sup> "The good," wherever found, means principle; it is that which gives aim, order, coherence. Pleasure is opposed to it just because it has no principle, but it is the chance feeling of the moment."<sup>6</sup> Injustice is ignorance and weakness and unhappiness.

It is well to recall that in these particular passages Plato is emphasizing only the contrast between the good and the pleasant, the use and the abuse of power, the happy and the pleasant life, the inner and the outer aspect of moral experience. And, if we should object that he is accentuating the differences by the use of a relatively abstract conception of knowledge and power and well-being, this would not be information to him. If we are not fully persuaded that the unjust life is unprofitable from every point of view, the reply is that Plato was not convinced of it. When he belabors his opponents, it is not in the attempt to prove that the life they advocate is destitute of knowledge or power or pleasure; he denies to that kind of knowledge and power and pleasure a highly significant place in what he conceives to be the order of moral values. This scheme of naturalistic ethics he regarded as a useful rule-of-thumb; he repudiated the *values* which constituted its goal. Plato agrees that rhetoric and the customary political art is effective as a mode of managing men advantageously.<sup>7</sup> Socrates knows well that without resorting to the art of rhetoric, he will be left speechless in the court.<sup>8</sup> So effective is its power that the 'good' man might be called upon to forfeit his life at any time.<sup>9</sup> Yet,

<sup>1</sup>Gorg., 469 B, 475 C, D, E.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 477 A-E, 478 C.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 478 D, E, 479 E, 507 A-C, 509 B.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 480 A-B, 507 A-C; Rep. I, 354 A, 353 E.

<sup>5</sup>Gorg., 506 C-E, 500 A, 499 A-B, 497 A, D.

<sup>6</sup>Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 287.

<sup>7</sup>Gorg., 463 A.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 521 D.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 511 B.

Socrates deliberately adopts the course which aims at the highest good (*τὸ βέλτιστον*) of the people, not at giving them pleasure.<sup>1</sup> This is the only course open to a true statesman. It will doubtless lead him into court. If so, he will be like a physician being brought to trial in a court of little boys, on the indictment of a cook; and when he makes his defense: 'My dear children, I have done all things for your good health,' it will set the jury in an uproar.<sup>2</sup> The plea of the good over against pleasure will be of no avail.<sup>3</sup> Socrates's only defense is that he has lived for the good; his helplessness is not such as he needs to be ashamed of.<sup>4</sup> Only the fool or coward fears death itself, but every *man* fears the doing of injustice; to arrive at the underworld with a soul dripping with unjust deeds is the worst of evils. It is worth repeating that Plato was fully aware that the pleasure theory of life gets things done. On the basis of its standard of efficiency, there is much truth in Callicles's invective against philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Yet, by philosophy *man* must live.

The advocate of the inwardness of the moral life in opposition to what is external and tends to pamper desires of the body, vindicates his preference by appeal to a myth.<sup>6</sup> In the time of Cronos, judgment of the rank of men took place on the day preceding their deaths. All sorts of cloaks were employed to disguise the inner nature and meaning of a chosen course of life. Pluto brought word of miscarried justice, whereupon Zeus instituted a new order of procedure. "I shall end this condition of affairs. Judgment is not well given at present. While judgment is in process the persons are alive and clothed about. Therefore, many who have evil souls are encased in fair bodies and rank and riches. And when the day arrives, many witnesses flock to their assistance, testifying how justly they have lived. At times, the judges are overawed by these witnesses, and, at the very time of judgment, they too are cloaked with hindrances; their eyes and ears and the whole body are interposed as a veil before the soul. All these things—the cloaks of the judges and the cloaks of the adjudged—make for hindrances to all concerned."<sup>7</sup> The remedy makes two provisions. Men are deprived of the foreknowledge of death, and in death the external veneer shall be laid aside. The judge with bared soul shall peer into the naked soul of the departed.<sup>8</sup> In this way the imagination of Plato pictures the essential inwardness of a rational and moral

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 521 D.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 522 A.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 522 B-C.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 522 D-E.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 484 C-D.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 522 A-B.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 523 C-D.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 523 E.



life. The philosopher's interest is not length of days, but quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Virtue is the health principle of the soul, for the sake of which he renounces the prize of wealth, office, and reputation; in the judgment of the many he stands apart in rugged isolation, a stranger in the city of his birth.<sup>2</sup> In his own eyes, his way is justified by the conviction that when the externals of life have fallen away, he can face impartial judgment with confidence and unafraid.<sup>3</sup>

B. Plato closes the discussion with Thrasymachus with the indication that the argument is incomplete.<sup>4</sup> The discourse, as he later remarks, has drifted to the concomitant circumstances of the thing, without knowledge of the thing itself.<sup>5</sup> Something, however, has been accomplished. It appears that a consistent and thoroughgoing selfishness will not yield a working basis for the moral life. Morality is essentially social. It must be viewed less in terms of external material advantages and what gives pleasure to the individual, and more as an inherent activity of the soul. Hence the demand voiced by Plato's young kinsmen: 'Strip justice bare.' Virtue is the dynamic principle of the soul which enables it to perform its function well, and therefore yields happiness. Henceforth, in Plato's mind, virtue (justice) and happiness or well-being go together. Accordingly, Plato turns to a second type of naturalistic ethical theory.

Glaucon and Adeimantus are excellent sons of an excellent sire, gifted by nature and able to flit about on the surface of public opinion for guidance in moral conceptions.<sup>6</sup> They have a vague notion that moral distinctions are genuine, that moral values are organic in the nature of the real world, but they are unable to uphold their confidence before the clamor of opposing voices. Thrasymachus tried to reduce all moral distinctions to mere convention. Good and evil, right and wrong, are only names attached by custom for the time being. At bottom there are no distinctions in value. Glaucon and Adeimantus do not accept these 'winds of doctrine,' but they are willing to become the spokesmen for them in the argument. Now, there are certain modifications in this theory of natural justice which are a source of perplexity to these young would-be champions of popular moral ideas. At first appearance, each one presents a distinct theory; but both hark back to the familiar distinction between nature and law, *φύσις* and *νόμος*, and both views

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 512 E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 521 D; cf. *Rep.* VI, 496 D-E.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 526 B.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* I, 354 C.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *Meno*, 71 B.

<sup>6</sup>*Rep.* II, 365 A.

look toward a compromise between them. For both men the problem has a common setting. To quote: "Both are puzzled by the apparent incongruity between morality itself and the external circumstances amid which it exists, between the being of things and the seeming, the externals of life which all seem to point one way, and the principles which, they are themselves convinced, point the other way."<sup>1</sup>

We shall follow Plato's separate treatment of these problems. Glaucon advances the commonly accepted notion that morality is a burden of civilized society from which there is no escape. Justice "must be pursued on account of its supposed rewards and reputations, but in itself it is to be avoided as disagreeable."<sup>2</sup> It is a good (useful), but not a 'natural' good (the best thing); it is a human contrivance for escaping a state of warfare of every man against every other man.<sup>3</sup> Morality is a good for the external results which it secures. "Now," says Glaucon, "setting aside rewards and accompaniments, I want to know what justice and injustice are, each in itself, as a power in the soul."<sup>4</sup>

There are three sets of 'facts' which seem to favor the above conclusion. First, justice arose as a necessary compromise. "They say that doing injustice is naturally a good, but to suffer injustice is an evil; to be the victim of injustice surpasses in evil the good which accrues from the practice of it. And so when men had wronged one another and had incurred injustice in return, and had tasted of both, not being able to obtain the one while avoiding the other, it seemed more profitable to agree mutually neither to do wrong nor to suffer it. Hence the existence of laws and covenants, which provide the terms 'lawful' and 'just.' This is the origin and nature of justice: a compromise between what is

<sup>1</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 49. Job upholds the position of these young men. Chapter 19, verses 25-27 (American standard edition):

"But as for me I know that my Redeemer (Vindicator) liveth,  
And at last he will stand upon the earth (over my dust):  
And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed,  
Then without my flesh shall I see God;  
Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side,  
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger."

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* II, 358 A.

<sup>3</sup>Hobbes makes the same assumption with reference to an egoistic and isolated natural individual, and on this basis develops the same theory of society. Justice is the third law of nature: "That men performe their Covenants made." *Leviathan*, Part I, Chapter XV.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* II, 358 B.



best, if one were able to practise injustice with impunity, and what is worst, if, when one suffers injustice, he is unable to retaliate. Justice is honored as a mean between these two courses, but not as a good; rather is it tolerated by reason of the inability of a weak humanity to do injustice. No natural man with sufficient power would, for an instant, submit to such an agreement; he would be insane if he did."<sup>1</sup> It is unwise to dismiss this contract theory on the ground that it is probably unhistorical. Its strength lies in the kernel of truth which it embodies. Society is based upon mutual understandings which crystallize into laws. But that is quite different from the abstract view which repudiates these laws as 'unnatural,' in contrast with a nature which has a deeper authority. In that sense, nature must mean what is native to man as he would be *minus* everything in him upon which society depends. Such a 'natural' man is a fiction of the imagination. These mutual understandings witness to the deeply social nature of man, and they represent what social experience has deemed best. And, as Nettleship says: "If it were true that to commit injustice with impunity is the real nature of man, there would have been no force to create society."<sup>2</sup>

In the second place, justice is involuntary and requires force. "Suppose we grant to the just and the unjust the authority to do whatever each one wishes, and then follow to see whither desire shall lead."<sup>3</sup> This is an analogue of the case of Gyges. If each had his magic ring, "the conduct of the one would not differ from that of the other; both would come to the same point in the end. This is the great proof that no one is voluntarily just except through compulsion. Justice is not an intrinsic good, since wherever anyone thinks he can be unjust safely, unjust he is; in his heart every man believes that injustice is much more profitable to himself than justice."<sup>4</sup> Here, again, ambiguity in terms plays a leading part in the confusion of truth and falsehood. It is assumed that force means only external compulsion, leaving out of consideration the power of rational conviction, and that society in obeying its own laws is acting contrary to its own will. Suffice it to say, that if the latter were true every one would dare to be unjust.

A third proof is, advantage is on the side of injustice. This becomes evident if we separate the two types of persons. Let the unjust man be the perfected incarnation of injustice, making no

<sup>1</sup>Rep. II, 358 E-359 B.  
<sup>2</sup>Lectures, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Rep. II, 359 C.  
<sup>4</sup>Ibid. II, 360 C.

deductions, but granting that, while doing the greatest injustice, he has acquired the highest reputation for justice. If he makes a false step, give him the ability to recover. Give to him the backing of force, the resources of friends and money.<sup>1</sup> Let the status of the just man be exactly the opposite. Strip him of everything except justice, and let him be thought the worst of men. Throughout all his life, fasten this reputation upon him, although he is actually just. When both the just and the unjust have reached the extreme, they may be adjudged in respect of happiness.<sup>2</sup> The eulogists of injustice will tell you that the latter will be scourged, racked, bound, have his eyes burned out, and finally, after suffering every kind of evil, will be impaled. Then will he know that the really valuable thing is only to seem and not to be just.<sup>3</sup> They say that, on the contrary, the unjust man is pursuing reality. He will be thought just. He will rule the city, marry whom he pleases, trade where he takes a fancy and always to his own advantage. He is the victor in contests, and has command of wealth. He can offer sacrifices to the gods, and dedicate gifts to them on a grander scale. The accepted notion is that both gods and men combine in making the life of the unjust better than that of the just.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, this picture is highly colored. Still, it does bring out the perplexity of those who attempt to correlate the values of the moral life with material elements of prosperity. We have already seen that Plato regards the attempt as futile. In the *Gorgias* Plato first accepts the antithesis of the inner and outer aspects of life, and maintains it gladly as the truth of moral experience.

The position advanced by Adeimantus further illustrates the fact that teachers of morals have usually confused moral principles with their material accompaniments. It says: On the whole justice secures happiness or prosperity; honesty is the best policy. This is a familiar way in which common sense expresses its vague faith that the world is somehow rational. "A certain prosperity, separable from goodness itself, is alleged to be the natural concomitant of goodness. Such a view is a natural distortion of a feeling in human nature that justice should have its reward."<sup>5</sup> Teachers and tutors are always telling their children and wards to be just, "not in commendation of justice itself, but of the reputation of justice," in order that its reputation may bring advantages in office, marriages, *et cetera*.<sup>6</sup> The more moderate admirers of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. II, 361 A-B.  
<sup>2</sup>Ibid. II, 361 C-D.  
<sup>3</sup>Ibid. II, 361 E-362 A.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. II, 362 B-C.  
<sup>5</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 60.  
<sup>6</sup>Rep. II, 363 A.



justice assign a motive for it in the fact that the gods rain benefits upon the pious.<sup>1</sup> The poets have extended the expectation of rewards to the future life and have made them attractive as motives for goodness here.<sup>2</sup> Or again, the universal voice of mankind is reiterating how grievous and troublesome is justice and the readiness with which the gods prosper the wicked and neglect the good. This is a favorite doctrine of those who expect a correspondence of virtue and material prosperity. The commonest observation is against such a correlation. Sooner or later the sceptical spirit breaks the calm:

"But as for me, my feet were almost gone;  
My steps had well nigh slipped.  
For I was envious at the arrogant,  
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked."<sup>3</sup>

The Psalmist felt the jar of his own preconceived theory that so much piety guarantees so much prosperity. Plato saw clearly the direction of such thinking. "All men with one accord acclaim temperance and justice honorable, but grievous and burdensome; licentiousness and injustice are sweet and easy to obtain; they are ignoble only by opinion and custom. Dishonesty, too, is for most part more profitable than honesty, so they say; the wicked who have riches and other advantages are happy; in public and private life they are readily welcomed and honored; the weak and the poor are despised and overlooked, although acknowledged to be better than the others. But most extraordinary of all are the stories they tell about the gods and virtue; the gods actually apportion to many good men misfortune and misery, and to the wicked a happy and good lot."<sup>4</sup> The latter theory is what furnishes business for mendicant priests. If what they say is true, and the gods can be bought over, this is the most thoroughgoing demolition of morality of all: the world is out-and-out immoral. Plato, therefore, dwells upon the educational bearing of this view. Youth will cherish the word of wise men and reason that, since "seeming triumphs over truth and is lord of happiness, to appearance I must wholly devote myself. I must circumscribe a picture and a shadow of virtue as a cloak, but behind it I must draw the fox-like subtlety and affability, which Archilochus the senior sage recommends." As

<sup>1</sup>See the first *Psalm*.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* II, 363 D-E.

<sup>3</sup>*Psalm* 73:2-3 (Standard version). Compare Jesus's startling parable in repudiation of this doctrine. *Matthew* 20:1-16.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* II, 362 E-364 B.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* II, 365 C.

Plato views it, this is the outcome of the innocent looking theory with which Adeimantus began, 'Honesty is the best policy.'

Only cowardice, then, or some other incapacity will hinder one from following the unjust life.<sup>1</sup> There are two ways of avoiding this conclusion: either a man is moral by divine chance, or he must confute these conceptions of morality by ferreting out their pre-suppositions. To accept the former alternative means to acknowledge that morality is unaccountable, that it is in principle irrational. Plato adopts the latter course. To this end he allows the reasonableness of the request of Adeimantus: "Therefore, prove to us not only that justice is better than injustice, but also what each in its own power effects in the possessor of it, what makes the one good and the other evil, whether seen or unseen by gods or by men."<sup>2</sup> Plato has accepted the antithesis of the bare principle of right as determined by the inward power of reason over against the combined splendors and terrors of material powers and consequences. Now he must justify, if possible, that acceptance. But for this task he is not yet ready.

### 3. THE SOCRATIC STANDPOINT.

During the foregoing discussion a question has many times arisen in our minds as to where in all this motley array of ethical conceptions is found the Socratic point of view? The answer that we are obliged to make is the apparently absurd one, everywhere and nowhere. For the historical Socrates whom we meet in the Platonic Dialogues is the summarizer of popular thought, and one who, in many respects, is dissatisfied with it. Like Glaucon and Adeimantus, he knew what his fellow-countrymen were thinking, he revolted against many of their conclusions, and was searching for a more satisfactory standpoint. The Socratic point of view, then, let it be admitted and without apology, is the tradition embedded in those early Dialogues<sup>3</sup> which form the basis for nearly all of the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* II, 366 D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* II, 367 E.

<sup>3</sup>For present purposes, the following order and division of the Dialogues is assumed:

#### THE SOCRATIC GROUP:

Apology  
Crito  
Euthyphro  
Charmides  
Alcibiades I  
Lysis  
Laches

#### THE PLATONIC GROUP:

Menexenus  
Gorgias  
Phaedrus  
Symposium  
Cratylus  
Meno  
Phaedo



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Plato has pictured the relation of Socrates to the enlighteners of his day as antagonistic. It would be futile to try to minimize that divergence of view or to question the accuracy of the account. Here Plato speaks with authority.<sup>2</sup> Two points in this connection, however, too frequently pass with slight notice. In the first place, Plato has transmitted the essential spirit of the *mature* Socrates. Secondly, pedagogical reasons require that the emphasis rest upon the elements of difference rather than the common basis. Still, the early Dialogues clearly indicate that in many respects there is no fixed gulf between them. On the contrary, there are traces of an intimate relation between Socrates and the sophists.<sup>3</sup> The sophists lay claim to considerable friendship.<sup>4</sup> A common charge was preferred against them.<sup>5</sup> Socrates understood the sophistic art perfectly, and he was not averse to indulging in their own methods.<sup>6</sup> Like any full-fledged sophist he delighted in making an opponent contradict himself.<sup>7</sup> Both Socrates and the Sophists attached importance to personality and to introspection.<sup>8</sup>

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Ion	Theaetetus
Republic, through Book II, 367 E	Parmenides
Euthydemus	Sophist
Protagoras	Politicus
	Philebus
	Timaeus
	Critias
	Laws

<sup>1</sup>Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, p. 120 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, Vol. I, p. 415. The author objects to speaking of the sophists as a group which held a common viewpoint.

<sup>4</sup>*Laches*, 176 D, 189 B, 195 B; *Charm.*, 161 C; *Symp.*, 221 B, 222 B.

<sup>5</sup>*Apol.*, 23 D.

<sup>6</sup>*Hippias Minor*, 369 B; *Alcib. I*, 114 C-D, 116 D, 117 D; *Charm.*, 161 E; *Lysis*, 212 C.

<sup>7</sup>*Gorg.*, 482 D.

<sup>8</sup>Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 107.

bearing upon the Socratic development of thought, and it is without prejudice to the truth that Socrates's importance in the history of thought depends more on the points of divergence between him and the sophists than upon their points of resemblance. To ignore this difference is to miss the significance of the Socratic teaching.<sup>1</sup> Socrates discovered the outstanding weakness in contemporary thought, namely, an exaggeration of the differences in human judgments to the neglect of their agreements. The sophistic humanists became enamored of all sorts of psychological considerations. They were led into the mistake of treating the particularity of sense experience as all-comprehensive, and of ignoring or misapprehending the deeper and more universal aspects of mind.<sup>2</sup> Theirs was the standpoint of an abstract rationalism which invaded Greek culture at the end of the fifth century before our era.<sup>3</sup> Everywhere the dissatisfaction with the authority of tradition was felt, as well as a need for an intellectual justification for what they were to accept as obligatory. The sophists supplied that desideratum by teaching their countrymen the variety of points of view from which a thing may be considered. The result in one direction was the spirit of antinomianism, the prevalence of which Plato decries.<sup>4</sup> Put briefly, everything centers about the individual point of view. Personal preferences and sentiments become the predominant feature in the intellectual and moral life. This means that anything may be considered true and right from some point of view. When this leveling process has been completed, the same line of reasoning is available for attack or defense.<sup>5</sup> The old antagonism between Nature and Law becomes a dissolving dualistic process within the mental life. If right is law or custom, it is valid only as long as the law is preferred; if right is nature, a supposed higher law, all constraint is removed.<sup>6</sup> "Man is the measure of all things."<sup>7</sup> "The essence of Sophistry lies in giving authority to a partial and abstract principle, in its isolation, as it

<sup>1</sup>More, Paul E., *Platonism*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ueberweg-Heinze, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. I, p. 107 (ninth edition).

<sup>3</sup>Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 271, p. 284.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* VII, 537 D-539 A.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Wallace, William, *Logic of Hegel*, pp. 228-229.

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may suit the interest and particular situation of the individual at the time."<sup>1</sup> The result is chaos.<sup>2</sup>

A predominating interest in ethics led Socrates into the effort to stem this nihilistic tide of sensationalism. He believed that truth and right are deeply rooted in the social life. In the social implications of experience, therefore, Socrates discovered the basis for his doctrine of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Trees somehow constitute a forest; at its basis life is not irrational and anarchical. There must be a quality of goodness, an excellence which will enable the soul to do its work well, and knowledge is that virtue. This is the most universally admitted doctrine of Socrates.<sup>4</sup> In nearly all of the early Dialogues, there is a tendency to identify the various virtues with knowledge. Wisdom enhances all the other goods of life. "It is likely that all the goods mentioned before (including the virtues as ordinarily conceived) are goods not in themselves, as the argument shows; in and for themselves they produce good results conditionally; if want of knowledge guide them, they are evils greater than their opposites, by as much as they are more powerful to aid and abet evil leadership. If, on the other hand, prudence and wisdom guide them, they are greater goods, but in and for themselves each of them has no value."<sup>5</sup> In this way the Delphic inscription *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* obtains fresh significance. Knowledge looms large in ethical significance. "It is a certain overmastering principle or power which lays hold primarily indeed upon the intellect, but through the intellect upon the entire personality, moulding and disciplining the will and the emotions into absolute unison with itself, a principle from which courage, temperance, justice, and every virtue inevitably flow."<sup>6</sup> Such is the import of the doctrine that knowledge is virtue.<sup>7</sup> It is written of Socrates: "His one great thought was how to transform and restore moral conduct by means of knowledge; knowledge and right conduct were so closely associated in his mind that he could find no other

<sup>1</sup>Wallace, *Op. cit.*, p. 148 (note on paragraph 81).

<sup>2</sup>More, *Op. cit.*, p. 25. The condemnation of the sophists is that they were so deeply immersed in popular thought and lent their weight to its onward sweep.

<sup>3</sup>Benn, *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Burnet, *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>*Euthyd.*, 281 D; *cf.*, 281 E.

<sup>6</sup>Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>7</sup>*Apol.*, 21 C, 29 E; *Euthyd.*, 280 B, 281 A; *Prot.*, 358 C, 352 C; *Meno*, 87 C.

object for knowledge save human conduct, and no guarantee for conduct save in knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

The Platonic Dialogues, however, give no assurance that Socrates ever attained his ideal of knowledge. There are many hints that he was always skeptical about the possibility of its attainment. The early Socratic dialogues have, for instance, negative conclusions, and this may be one of the reasons for it. In the *Charmides* the argument ridicules the dream of universal knowledge which Socrates proposed, because of its uselessness.<sup>2</sup> We saw, in the *Protagoras*, that the Socratic demand for a certain kind of knowledge as the requirement for virtue or goodness, was buried under the mass of evidence which Protagoras adduced to show that everyone was actually engaged in the teaching of virtue. Most significant of all, Socrates makes no immediate attempt to refute the argument. He goes on to convince Protagoras that common sense knowledge is often inconsistent and incomplete, but he does not infer the uselessness of such knowledge, nor does he intimate the worthlessness of the virtue based upon it, although these are the presuppositions with which the Dialogue opens. Finally, when Socrates does venture suggestions for the reconstruction and improvement of ethical theory, the 'science of knowledge' is a refinement upon the hedonistic calculus. The *Protagoras* seems to attain its goal in a measuring art which would cancel the deception of appearance and bring the true pleasures into clear relief, and enable the soul to find abiding peace.<sup>3</sup> Did Socrates, for the time being, give up his ideal of a conceptual knowledge, and accept the major premise of the psychological hedonists that the one desirable thing is pleasure, and that knowledge consists in making the pursuit of it more scientific? Or is this only an indication that the psychological method continued to dominate the Socratic teaching as it did the sophistic schools? The doctrine of the concept, based upon general ideas, seems to point that way.

The spectacle presented by the 'historical' Socrates, a giant who stands over against the thought of his day, rebuking it for its superficiality and for its extravagances, but unable to transcend its principles, because he did not discover the assumptions lurking in its theories, suggests the picturesque lines from the *Odyssey*.

<sup>1</sup>Zeller, *Socrates and the Socratic Schools*, p. 115; *cf.*, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>175 B-D.

<sup>3</sup>*Prot.*, 356 D-E, 357 D; *cf.* More, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.



The blinded Polyphemus is sitting at the door of his cave, eager to put his hand upon the troublemakers. Then:<sup>1</sup>

"Last of all, the black ram approached the door,  
Heavy with much wool, and with me pondering many things."

#### 4. PYTHAGOREAN INFLUENCE.

We have seen that the Socratic method turned the mind inward upon itself in such a way as to disclose the general social character of experience. Socrates is convinced that there are certain general principles of mind common to all men, and that this gives experience a socially shareable and dependable character. But the Socratic concept of mind is a good way removed from the inward self-sufficiency of reason which the philosopher in the *Gorgias* assumes, when he defiantly opposes the doctrine that the good is the pleasant, or from such a spiritual principle as is implied in the willingness to 'strip justice bare'. Until reason has been conceived as a relatively independent principle which organizes experience in terms of its own categories, the basis for the Platonic asceticism is lacking. This doctrine goes back to the conception of the fundamental difference in the nature and value of the soul<sup>2</sup> in comparison with the body. The beginnings of that opposition are undoubtedly contained in Socrates's notion of general concepts in distinction from transient sense perceptions and in his high appraisal of the inner health and peace of the soul in comparison with external material goods, even with existence itself.<sup>3</sup> Plato was enabled to transcend this Socratic standpoint, however, through the reinterpretation of another important current of ancient thought, the Pythagorean tradition.

Straightway after the death of Socrates, Plato set out on an extended period of travel. During the years between 399 B.C. and 387 B.C. he became acquainted with the ethical-religious teachings of the Pythagoreans. Contact with this teaching left its traces upon his succeeding work, beginning with the *Gorgias*,<sup>4</sup> written near the close of this period. Various stories relate how Plato came into possession of the book containing the chief Pythagorean doctrines.<sup>5</sup> However that may be, the prominence in certain

<sup>1</sup>Book IX, lines 444-445.

<sup>2</sup>To the Greeks, 'soul' meant the principle of life. This meaning must not be confused with 'modern' connotations of the term.

<sup>3</sup>Gomperz, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>493 A. This is his earliest elaboration of important aspects of the doctrine.

<sup>5</sup>*Diogenes Laertius*, Bk. VII, 15; VIII, 1 (Bohn's Classical Library).

dialogues of notions kindred to this teaching bears witness to its influence.

Pythagoreanism is probably a part of a widespread religious revival which swept over Greece during the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. This movement found expression in part in the mystery religions. Orphism promulgated very pronounced views regarding an immortal soul, which was supposed to have fallen from the world of light, and to be restless with the desire to regain its lost estate by formal ascetic observances. The attempt to appropriate the general idea of asceticism in intellectual form by the renunciation of what belongs to the senses and by a high appraisal of the value of the soul, is the main tendency of Pythagoreanism. In this way the usefulness of this religious movement spread to the more educated and aristocratic classes.<sup>1</sup> Pythagoras, it seems, reinterpreted *theoria* as a passionless contemplation of a rational, unchanging truth, and converted the Orphic 'way of life' into a 'pursuit of wisdom' or *philosophia*.<sup>2</sup> The new 'way' is a way of death, but now it means death to the emotions and to the lusts of the body in order that the intellect may be untrammelled in its quest for truth.<sup>3</sup>

Early Pythagorean philosophy gave prominence to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which, in its various aspects, included the idea of reminiscence, of the kinship of all life, and the conception of the law of cycles.<sup>4</sup> All of these notions are prominent in Platonic writings. Since the soul is immortal, the aim of the Orphic-Pythagorean discipline is to rid the soul of its impurities and fit it for reunion with the company of the gods.<sup>5</sup> The essential divinity<sup>6</sup> of the soul forms the subject of discourse in the *Phaedo*, as we shall see later. With this conception of the soul Plato linked the notion of recollection. They stand or fall together.<sup>7</sup> The argument from reminiscence, extensively employed in the *Meno*, is especially singled out in the *Phaedo* for reaffirmation.<sup>8</sup> The idea of the unity which pervades all nature is central in Pythagoras's thought.<sup>9</sup> Because of this principle the world has order and proportion; measure and harmony are found everywhere.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 191 ff. Thilly, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Cornford, F. M., *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 194; cf. *Phaedo*, 64 A; *Rep.* X, 600 B.

<sup>4</sup>*Ap. Porph. Vit. Pyth.*, 18, 19.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *Phaedr.*, 247 A.

<sup>6</sup>Non-natural, spiritual, opposed to the change and transiency of the material world.

<sup>7</sup>*Phaedo*, 76 E.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 91 E.

<sup>9</sup>*Diog. Laert.*, Bk. VIII, 19.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, Bk. VIII, 19.



In this principle we have the doctrine of the limit, τὸ πέρασ<sup>1</sup>. Goodness is essentially an order or arrangement; likewise, temperance and justice express harmony.<sup>2</sup> The Pythagorean 'limit' becomes in Plato's thought the organizing principle of what is otherwise indefinite and chaotic.<sup>3</sup> Changes in the transient world follow the law of the principle of definition or the limit. Existence accords with the law of cycles. When the soul leaves this period of incarceration in the body, having paid the price of its failure, another term of life awaits it.<sup>4</sup> This is the basis for disciplinary exercise. The final emancipation from the body comes by purifying ordinances.<sup>5</sup> The advance of the Pythagorean over the Orphic doctrine of purification lies in its application to the more internal and intellectual aspect of experience.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Pater epitomizes the life of the founder in this way. "In the midst of that aesthetically so brilliant world of Greater Greece, as if anticipating Plato, he has, like the philosophic kings of the Platonic Republic, already something of a monk, of monastic *ascesis*, about him. Its purpose is to fit him for, duly to refine his nature towards, that closer vision of truth to which perchance he may be even now upon his way."<sup>7</sup> We turn now to see what use Plato made of this tradition.

<sup>1</sup>Burnet, *Op. cit.*, p. 44 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Gorg.*, 503 E. *Rep.* IV, 432 A. *Phaedo*, 93 C.

<sup>3</sup>Pater, W., *Plato and Platonism*, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>*Cf. Phaedr.*, 248 B; *Rep.* X, 617 A; *Tim.*, 42 B.

<sup>5</sup>*Diog. Laert.*, Bk. VIII, 19.

<sup>6</sup>Burnet, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 50.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRINCIPLE OF REASON IN THE WORLD AND IN THE INDIVIDUAL

If, then, the foregoing discussion has not been misleading, the basis for Plato's asceticism inheres in his conception of an inner moral principle which maintains itself in opposition to all external conditions and circumstances. The man whose happiness is altogether or mainly dependent upon the inward self, orders his life according to the best.<sup>1</sup> In that masterpiece of writing where he first sketches the two irreconcilable ideals of conduct, Plato indicates clearly the side on which he stands. The philosopher, in the *Gorgias*, is a stranger in the city of his birth;<sup>2</sup> his fellow-statesmen are all men-pleasers; he knows that it is only a question of time when he shall be executed. Yet, in the epilogue the hero says: "Come, follow me, and I will lead you where you will be happy in life and after death; so the argument directs. Yes, by Zeus, if you are really a noble and good man, exercised in virtue (ἀσκῶν ἀρετῇν), never mind the one who despises you as a fool and who treats you with indignity, if he so desires; be of good cheer and receive the insulting blow, for you will never come to harm . . . Let us apply the present argument as our guide, which intimates to us that the best manner of life is in the exercise of justice and every other virtue. This is the best life both now and hereafter (καὶ ζῆν καὶ τεθνάναι)."<sup>3</sup>

The aim of the preceding chapter is to point out that Plato arrived at this conception of reason through a critical understanding of the main currents of contemporary ethical thought. To adapt a phrase from Emerson, the whole world passed through Plato's mind. And here the disciple lives not apart from his two great masters. Socrates and Pythagoras are his two chief historical sources.<sup>4</sup> Primarily through them Plato became aware of the

<sup>1</sup>*Menex.*, 247E-248A.

<sup>2</sup>*Cf. Rep.* IX, 592A. Stewart, H. L., "Was Plato an Ascetic," *Phil. Rev.* Vol. XXIV, p. 610 ff. Plato's attitude toward the culture of his time is regarded as the most persuasive reason for finding in him a deep vein of asceticism.

<sup>3</sup>*Gorg.*, 527C-E.

<sup>4</sup>Havet, E., *Le Christianisme et ses origines*, Vol. I, p. 203.



principal methods and results of reflection upon the problems of human conduct prior to his time. From them, too, he received suggestions for the reconstruction of moral theory along new lines. Just how Plato used these suggestions and with what results, is the main consideration immediately before us.

By way of preparation for a clearer understanding of the distinctively Platonic viewpoint we shall restate certain points of the preceding discussion. The age of the sophists expresses, in part, a revolt against the naive assumption that reality is an external natural order which takes precedence over the subjective and self-centered life of human beings. This dissatisfaction with the materialistic metaphysics marks the beginning of the antithesis between Nature (*φύσις*) and Law (*νόμος*), the world of physical objects and of man himself. Naturalists conceived ideas and moral values as somehow attached to the external natural world of physical objects. The sophists took the other side, and emphasized the importance of the human elements in all experience; after all, the only world we know and value is *our* world. The next step taken by the sophists was to apply the old dualism between nature and *nomos*, a natural and a human order, within human society. 'Natural' now signifies what man would be *minus* all the laws and mutual agreements upon which society depends. The independence of the 'natural' man from all the constraints of conventions and laws develops into an anarchistic superman glorified by Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Such an existence, Plato is convinced, is not the life of a human being, but that of a cormorant. It is a complete subjectivity where disorganization renders social and individual life impossible.<sup>1</sup>

There are certain metaphysical implications of this subjective attitude in morals which Plato was quick to discover. The doctrine of the successful sophists is the old 'philosophy of change' applied to the field of morals. The major vice of sophistry, then, lies in its denial of an objective and dependable reality. Ideas and moral values are the wares of the individual mind. Moral experience is anti-social in principle, and therefore impossible. As Plato remarks: it is obvious one cannot speak of a reality which is ever passing into something else.<sup>2</sup> Such a reality could never be known; indeed, if everything is in a state of transition or flux, knowledge is impossible.<sup>3</sup> On the assumptions of Protagoras's

<sup>1</sup>*Rep.* I, 351E-352A; cf. also VIII, 565C ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Crat.*, 439E.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 440A.

doctrine of relativism, there is no difference between wisdom and ignorance.<sup>1</sup> Virtues and vice, then, are the same.<sup>2</sup> Conduct, too, is in a class with the flux of things.<sup>3</sup> His own words reveal his reaction best. "But you will not agree with Euthydemus, I think, that all attributes at one and the same time and always, inhere in all men equally. It follows then, that things have their own essence and dependable character; they are not relative to us, nor can we modify them according to our own fancy, but our mode of conception is determined by the thing itself, according to the essence which it has by nature."<sup>4</sup> What declaration could be more explicit on the question of Plato's fundamental principle? Both knowledge and moral values are organic within an objective and socially shareable reality.

It is significant that Plato links the doctrine of flux with the sensationalism of Protagoras, the famous teacher of morals. According to him, the viewpoint of subjectivity which expressed itself in a radical individualism finds its roots in a physiological psychology. This psychology is the counterpart of the standpoint of naive naturalism against which the sophists revolted. Its central principle is that the whole life of mind is the voice and the language of the physical organism. 'Man is the measure of all things,' and 'man' is a combination of bodily sensations and desires. Perception is the test of truth and pleasure-pain is the criterion of the good. Modern versions of the Protagorean thesis speak of the mind as the instrument for adjusting the life of the physical organism in terms of its environment. A passage from Santayana's *Life of Reason* on "How Thought is Practical," summarizes this conception very clearly. "Nothing is more natural or more congruous with all the analogies of experience than that animals should feel and think. The relation of mind to body, of reason to nature, seems to be actually this: when bodies have reached a certain complexity and vital equilibrium, a sense begins to inhabit them which is focussed upon the preservation of that body and on its reproduction. This sense, as it becomes reflective and expressive of physical welfare, points more and more to its own persistence and harmony, and generates the Life of Reason. Nature is reason's basis and theme; reason is nature's consciousness; and, from the point of view of that consciousness when it has arisen, reason is also nature's justification and goal . . . Now the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 386C.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 386D.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 386E.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 386D-E.



body is an instrument, the mind its function, the witness and reward of its operation. Mind is the body's entelechy, a value which accrues to the body when it has reached a certain perfection, of which it would be a pity, so to speak, that it should remain unconscious; so that while the body feeds the mind, the mind perfects the body, lifting it and all its natural relations and impulses into the moral world, into the sphere of interests and ideas."<sup>1</sup>

The ethical corollary of this psychological standpoint is that values are what satisfy the wants of the psycho-physical organism; they are a projection of the physical life. By hypothesis, the good or happiness is the well-being of the bodily organism. Reason is "the faculty which enables us to act with a view to the distant and the future."<sup>2</sup> In the language of the *Protagoras*, reason is the measuring art which is the salvation of human kind;<sup>3</sup> it is sense acting at a distance. Values are nevertheless subjective, the echo of the body's 'interest.' In a rather flippant vein, Hermogenes states the case for all concepts. He has never been convinced "that there is any principle of correctness in concepts other than agreement and convention. In my opinion, any name assigned to a thing is the correct one; and if another name is given in its stead, and the old one is no longer in use, the new name is just as correct as the former one. For example, we change the names of our slaves, and the new title is just as good as the old one; nature does not assign names to anything; that is a matter of custom and habit of the persons who use them."<sup>4</sup> More modern evolutionary theories employ similar principles, only the emphasis has shifted to the element of survival for a longer period of time. Good and evil are values which express the judgments of a more or less arbitrarily chosen period of history.<sup>5</sup> "The distinction of good and bad corresponds to the domination of one variety, that of the good, which has come to prevail according to the process described in virtue of its being a social equilibrium . . . The good ideal, then, has been created by the struggle of ideals in which it has predominated. Evil is simply that which has been rejected and defeated in the struggle with the good."<sup>6</sup> We quote J. G.

<sup>1</sup>*Reason in Common Sense*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen, Leslie, *Science of Ethics*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>356C-E.

<sup>4</sup>*Crat.*, 384D; cf., 385D.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. M'Gilvary, E. B., "The Warfare of Moral Ideals," *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 26, p. 51 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander, S., *Moral Order and Progress*, pp. 306-307; cf., p. 369.

Schurman's comment on this viewpoint. "Moral rules are regarded as the expression of those social adaptations which, on the whole, and after infinite groupings, proved most serviceable in the preservation of groups of human animals in the struggle for existence. They are the picked-up clothes which warmed and protected a naked social body and enabled it to vanquish all its rivals. Little wonder if, after the conflict, they become a fetish to the victors—to all but the few who have tracked their fossil history!"<sup>1</sup>

A theory of life, the chief good of which is the satisfaction of elemental desires and needs of the body, is for Plato devoid of what is most characteristically human. He states the objection in his own way: "But, Socrates, if you were providing for a city of pigs, what other provender would you feed the creatures?"<sup>2</sup> Or put in broader terms, the indulgent attitude of the senses toward all values involves the subtle denial of values. Plato finds his best illustration of this in the democratic man. "Indeed, he lives from day to day welcoming the *next* desire; now he is sipping wine and listening to the flute; then he goes on a water diet and reduces his flesh; occasionally he takes up gymnastic, and in turn he idles to the neglect of everything; and, once more, he lives the life of the philosopher. Oftimes he turns to politics, when he ambles about doing and saying whatever occurs to him. Perchance he envies some warrior and is carried away with that art, or some business man, and off he goes in that direction. Neither order nor constraint invades his life. This existence he terms sweet and free and blessed, and so it remains his ideal."<sup>3</sup> Such a life means the inversion of all social relationships.<sup>4</sup> Then Plato adds with a touch of humor: "An inexperienced man could scarcely believe how much greater is the liberty of domestic animals in a democracy than in any other state. For, really, the she-dogs, as the proverb says, are as good as their she-mistresses, and the horses and asses are accustomed to march along with absolute freedom and dignity, and they charge at anyone whom they meet if he does not clear the way for them; and all things are just ready to burst with liberty."<sup>5</sup> In more direct language, too, Plato charges the whole sophistic viewpoint with inability to make salient distinctions and maintain a scale of values. "Particularly, I like this popular and suave aspect of your discussion, so genial that when you assert there is no distinction to be made between good and the not-good, between

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* II, 372D.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 561C-D.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 563A.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 563C.



white and any other color, or any such distinction whatsoever, you absolutely shut people up, as you say. And this applies not only to your other persons' mouths, but also to your own; and that is very gracious of you, and your arguments are emptied of offense."<sup>1</sup>

To what extent Socrates and Plato construe these representative viewpoints in terms of their own thought is a matter of conjecture, and fortunately does not concern us here. The important thing is that sophistic thought confused principles of morality with external material accompaniments and results. Socrates tried to overcome the anti-social tendencies which grew out of that confusion. He emphasized the inwardness of the moral life and the general social aspect of mind. Yet, from the limitations of the psychological viewpoint Socrates seems never to have escaped. In the *Protagoras*, he wavers between two conceptions of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> One is the conceptual type which discredits the positive significance of all ordinary morality; the other is a calculating art by which the pursuit of pleasure could be made more scientific and less individualistic. Such is the dilemma which seemed for him to be involved in the summary proposition that 'knowledge is virtue.' Doubtless his practice was more enlightened than his theory. Moderation seems to have been the cornerstone of his philosophy of life.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Socrates was not in any strict sense an ascetic.<sup>4</sup> Zeller puts the matter succinctly: "To continue master of himself in the midst of enjoyment, by the lucid clearness of his thought—that was the aim which his moderation proposed to itself."<sup>5</sup>

We shall see later how extensively Plato employed the Pythagorean conception of the spiritual nature of the soul, with its corollary, the recollection of ideas. Or to put it more accurately, Plato combined with this Pythagorean notion the best elements of the Socratic tradition, and the result of this synthesis was a transformation of both traditions. This synthesis we recognize in the Doctrine of Ideas, and in the conception of the spontaneous and self-sufficient life of the soul. These two roots of the Platonic philosophy<sup>6</sup> are of primary significance in this study. If these doctrines

<sup>1</sup>*Euthyd.*, 303D-E; cf. *Prot.*, 331D-E.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart, H. L., *Op. cit.*, p. 606, regards this Dialogue as marking the transition from Plato, the pupil of Socrates, to Plato, the independent thinker.

<sup>3</sup>Xen., *Memor.*, I, v, 4; v, 6; vi, 5; II, I, 11; IV, v, 9. *Euthyd.*, 280B; *Meno*, 87C.

<sup>4</sup>*Sympos.*, 174A, 220A, 223C. Also, Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 342.

<sup>5</sup>*Socrates and the Socratic Schools*, p. 163; cf. also p. 75 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, p. 133.

embody a synthesis of Socratic and Pythagorean concepts, can an intelligible account be given of their combination and transformation? The following general explanation seems most adequate. The Doctrine of Ideas points toward a fusion of the Pythagorean idea of reminiscence with the notion of the Socratic concept. The Socratic emphasis upon the inwardness of virtue, apart from the externals of wealth and honor, when combined with the Pythagorean idea of the self-dependence of the soul, coupled with a semi-monastic life, constitutes a notion which approaches the Platonic idea of immortality. Here, then, are the conditions of Platonic asceticism: a radical difference between the nature of the soul and the body, and a corresponding high value assigned to the former.

In the *Gorgias*, Plato made much of the distinction between the use and the abuse of power.<sup>1</sup> "It is a difficult thing," he remarks near the close of the discussion, "and deserving of much praise that one in great authority spends his life justly, when he has the opportunity for wrong-doing; and there are few men of this character."<sup>2</sup> The distinction between doing what is agreeable and what is just, Plato thinks, points directly to an inward and superior spiritual principle which is the life-spring of the moral life and the basis of man's social experience. To the same effect is Plato's extensive treatment of the admission that doing injustice is more agreeable, but more shameful than being the victim of it.<sup>3</sup> The awakening sense of shame (*aidōs*) in a man's life marks the beginning of a distinctively moral experience. It is the declaration of the independence of reason from sensibility, and the mutual recognition of the right of reason to rule in the moral life. Accordingly, in the *Phaedrus* Plato explicitly distinguishes between a rational and an irrational part of the soul, and it is a distinction which, in the main, remains unmodified. How can we distinguish desires, and how differentiate the true lover from the non-lover? The reply is now forthcoming. "It is necessary to note that in each of us there are two guiding and ruling principles, which we follow whithersoever they lead; one is the natural desire of pleasure, the other is the acquired judgment which aspires after the best. These two principles are sometimes in agreement, and again in mutual rebellion; at one time the one rules, and again the other assumes authority. When opinion, assisted by reason, leads and

<sup>1</sup>466D, 469B-E, 525E; cf. *Rep.* X, 615E.

<sup>2</sup>*Gorg.*, 526A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 474C, 475E, 477C, 478B, 489A-B.



brings us to the best, the conquering principle is called temperance; but when irrational desire draws us to pleasure and holds sway, to this misrule is applied the name licentiousness (*ὑβρις*).<sup>1</sup> Here the good and the pleasant stand opposed, as do the principles in the soul with which each is allied. In general, the λογιστικόν or principle of reason is designated the immortal part of the soul (by which Plato means the universal organizing principle of experience), and the principles of ambition and appetite, θυμοειδές καὶ ἐπιθυμητικόν, together constitute the irrational and mortal part. The immortal part of the soul embodies the rule of reason; the mortal part leads in the recollection of feelings in which it revels and becomes the friend of cowardice.<sup>3</sup>

From now on, we shall meet the distinction between reason and sensibility at every turn, in one form or another. A few examples will suggest its range. Every soul must partake of the universal reason as a condition of becoming a human being.<sup>4</sup> Souls are graded according to the degree in which they participate in universal mind.<sup>5</sup> Every soul has its two main parts.<sup>6</sup> Reason, the charioteer of the soul, is scarcely ever free from the difficulties of checking the unruly steeds, ambition and appetite.<sup>7</sup> "The mind's eye begins to discern sharply when the power of the bodily eye is on the wane."<sup>8</sup> "That which is comprehended by intelligence and reason is ever the same; the object of opinion and sensation without reason is in process of becoming and perishing, but never really is."<sup>9</sup> The inferior principle introduces into morals strife and inconsistency.<sup>10</sup> Our feelings, like cords or strings, draw us in different and opposite ways, and to opposite actions, "wherein lies the distinction between virtue and vice."<sup>11</sup> When the issue of the happier life is in process of judgment, the lower parts of the soul are in deadlock,<sup>12</sup> until reason applies the mastering hand.<sup>13</sup> In the *Phaedo*, the opposition seemingly falls into a harsh antagonism between soul and body. But it is important to keep in mind that in this Dialogue the body is the material symbol for all that part

<sup>1</sup>The term is very difficult to translate. Plato goes on to explain that it has many forms. The word has a decided moral significance. It means insolence, lack of good moral taste, a morbid tendency to overstep natural limits.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedr.*, 237D-E.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* X, 604D, E.

<sup>4</sup>*Phaedr.*, 249E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 271B; *Timaeus*, 90B-C.

<sup>6</sup>*Phileb.*, 35C, 41C; *Laws* V, 726A.

<sup>7</sup>*Phaedr.*, 248A.

<sup>8</sup>*Sympos.*, 219A.

<sup>9</sup>*Tim.*, 28A; cf., 71A.

<sup>10</sup>*Rep.* X, 603D.

<sup>11</sup>*Laws* I, 644E; cf. *Rep.* X, 604A.

<sup>12</sup>*Rep.* IX, 581C.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* 582E.

of the soul which is apt to be swayed by the more elemental and irrational desires.<sup>1</sup> The irrational soul takes on additional proportions when it is dominated by the body. It does not die when its particular bodily house dissolves away, but the irrational principle must be reduced to the role of passivity before the immortal soul can return to its native abode.<sup>2</sup>

With this general notion of a rational part of the soul in opposition to a sensuous and mortal part before us, we must seek a more definite conception of Plato's view of the nature of this opposition. For upon this twofold nature of the soul rests his distinction between the pleasant and the good. The immortal soul or reason is the power which undergirds and gives a unitary and social character to human experience. Reason is the self-sufficient spiritual principle which induces order within experience, or as Plato terms it, measure, not however in terms of magnitude, but in respect of the relation between parts.<sup>3</sup> The sensuous and mortal part of the soul, Plato thinks, is incapable of establishing a criterion of the morally good, just because it does not participate in this principle of proportion. This broad distinction concerning the dual nature of the soul is definitely and vigorously maintained by Plato; the details of this conception are not so obvious. He discusses various aspects of the question in piecemeal fashion, and he is not always consistent. The subject remained a perplexity to him.<sup>4</sup> Where his description appears to be the most definite, the subject is treated in a highly imaginative and symbolic form. He tells us: "Form the notion of a complex and many-headed beast. Let it have a ring of heads from all kinds of beasts, gentle and wild, and the power to change its form and to multiply at will."<sup>5</sup> To this must be added the notion of a lion, and also that of a man. Then mould these three ideas into one form, and the result will be an image of the soul.<sup>6</sup> The multiform 'beast, gentle and wild,' illustrates the motley character of the appetitive life; the 'lion' symbolizes the life of will and the higher emotions; the 'man' expresses what is essentially human, *i.e.*, reason.

We turn then to the chief ways in which Plato elaborates and defines his conception that moral experience is based on an objectively real and permanent spiritual order. As a starting point, Plato applies the method of destructive criticism to certain prevalent

<sup>1</sup>Cf. More, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedo*, 81B; *Phaedr.*, 250E-251B; *Rep.* VI, 511B; *Tim.*, 42B ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Polit.*, 283C ff.; *Phileb.*, 25E ff. <sup>4</sup>*Rep.* IX, 588C.

<sup>5</sup>*Tim.*, 72D.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 588D.



conceptions. Reason, the principle which organizes the moral life, is a *non-natural* principle; the soul is not a material compound as certain physical philosophers say.<sup>1</sup> The soul is prior to the body in birth and in excellence.<sup>2</sup> The additive relation of particular sense perceptions can not account for the unity of our experience. No man, Plato tells us, can be a true worshipper of the gods, who does not know that the soul is prior to and rules all bodies, and who does not see the universal presence of reason in all things.<sup>3</sup> Experience is not a congeries of particulars. The Platonic conception of reason is not an extension or a refinement of the principles of the naturalistic theories which he opposes. The lines from Matthew Arnold express his attitude on this point precisely:

"Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,  
And in that *more* lies all his hopes of good.  
Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;  
Nature and man can never be fast friends.  
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!"

Tyrants and rhetoricians are weak and wretched; they cannot do what they will, but only what seems best to them.<sup>4</sup> What a man really desires is not a particular object for which he strives, but some end to which these particulars are a means. Health, wealth, honor, power, or pleasure, are not sought for themselves but *sub ratione boni*. These particular goods are a means for the satisfaction of a relatively permanent self implied in the conception of a *summum bonum*.

Plato is fully aware that the notion of a composite naturalistic soul advocated by the sophists issues into a subjective idealism which involves a double error. The viewpoint first confuses the object of experience with the process, and then identifies the truth with the psychological process involved. Psychologically considered, every experience is equally true and real, and error is unexplainable.<sup>5</sup> And so in the *Euthydemus* the exponent of naturalistic culture maintains that lying and contradiction are impossible.<sup>6</sup> Whereupon Plato indulges his wit to the extent of making his opponents champion a variety of ridiculous propositions. It is characteristic of the standpoint to insist upon unqualified answers to qualified questions, and it is fond of isolated

<sup>1</sup>*Laws* X, 891C; *Phaedo*, 97B-99D.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedo*, 80A, B; *Tim.*, 34C; *Laws* X, 892A, 896B-C; XII, 959A.

<sup>3</sup>*Laws* XII, 967D, E; cf. *Phaedr.*, 265D-E; *Rep.* VII, 531A ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Gorg.*, 466D ff; cf. *Rep.* VIII, 566B ff.

<sup>5</sup>*Phileb.*, 37A ff; *Crat.*, 385B.

<sup>6</sup>286B.

particular 'facts.' The whole truth of experience is what, for the time being, is completely obvious and immediate in consciousness. Each particular time-experience is externally related to every other particular, both in the past and in the future. There is no perspective, or internal and organic relation of parts. Since Euthydemus is a father, he is the father of all, men and animals included.<sup>1</sup> You cannot have too much of a good thing, and so one should take a cartload of medicine, and arm for war with as many shields and spears as possible.<sup>2</sup> Gold is a good, and so one should have as much as possible of it everywhere and at all times. "The man would be happiest if he had three talents of gold in his stomach, a talent of it in his pate (*κρανίω*), and a stater of gold in each eye."<sup>3</sup> Ctesippus rallies to the assistance of Socrates and promotes the process of *reductio ad absurdum*. "They say that the happiest and best of the Scythians are those who have gold in their skulls (*κρανίους*), and in large quantity . . . and what is more remarkable, they drink out of their own gold-plated skulls and having the crowns of their heads in their hands, they mirror the contents of their own minds."<sup>4</sup> Socrates is struck quite dumb with the argument when the sophists concede that Zeus and the other gods are their possessions, and it is theirs to sell the gods, give them away, or use them in any way, as one might use other animals.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, this is not argument, but ridicule. It does give an idea of the depth of feeling which Plato entertained with respect to the proper procedure in philosophy. These absurd admissions on the part of his opponents grow out of the notion that the soul or self is dependent upon the phenomenal series. Values can not be objective and social so long as they are subordinated to the pleasures and pains of the physical life. Plato complains that the 'wolf' gets a hearing, even though he omits first principles in philosophy. "To share in the truth is not required of the would-be skillful rhetorician in matters of justice and of the good, or concerning men who are just and good, whether by nature or by nurture. For in the courts of law no man cares about truth, but only about conviction. Now conviction rests upon probability, and this, in turn, is the chief concern of one who speaks effectively. Sometimes actual facts should not be mentioned, unless they are suitably probable. Give probability the right of way in accusa-

<sup>1</sup>*Euthyd.*, 298C-D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 299B-C.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 299E.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 299E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 303A.



tion and in defense; in speaking, by all means, let probability be pursued, while blandly dismissing the truth (πολλὰ εἰπόντα χαίρειν τῷ ἀληθεῖ)."<sup>1</sup>

Plato further maintains the non-natural or *spiritual* nature of the soul by pointing out that it is that universal principle which in reality constitutes the unity of ordinary experience. We can see this best in his criticism of the doctrine that 'knowledge is virtue,' where knowledge is conceived exclusively as either perception or conception. Knowledge which is built up out of the practice of a particular art is limited to that special field; the arts are not functionally interchangeable.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, such knowledge cannot shed any light upon the good and the evil, which is what we want to know.<sup>3</sup> Until we know good and evil we cannot tell whether an art is performing its function well or ill.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, if virtue depends upon an abstract conception of a particular fact, justice as an inclusive virtue is of no aid whatsoever in life.<sup>5</sup> In the first section of the *Protagoras*, we saw that Plato cast serious doubt upon the Socratic ideal of a certain kind of conceptual knowledge as an unconditional requirement for virtue. The *Meno* takes up the problem and questions the reasonableness of the demand for that kind of knowledge. Meno flings out the sophistic objection about the possibility of enquiry. It is a rebuff which induces a change of attitude on the part of Socrates. "I understand your meaning, Meno. You see, you are introducing a captious question: it is impossible to inquire about what one knows or does not know. One cannot investigate what is already known, for such an inquiry is unnecessary, nor what is not known, because he does not know what he shall investigate."<sup>6</sup> This is not only the retort of a sceptical sophist; it is an attack upon an abstract conception of knowledge. In a most direct way Plato is here taking up the limitation of the Socratic proposition that 'knowledge is virtue.' Meno's question shows that the defect lies in taking knowledge to be everything or nothing; the assumption is that subject and object are discrete particulars, and that experience is either knowledge absolute or complete ignorance. *Ex hypothesi*, such a conception of experience debars all common sense experience from knowledge by a gulf wide and deep; the passage from complete ignorance to knowledge is accomplished in one bound or not at all. Hence, where this criticism is launched, Socrates repeatedly questions his

<sup>1</sup>Phaedr., 272D-E; cf., 273B.

<sup>2</sup>Ion, 537D, 540D-E.

<sup>3</sup>Alcib. I, 117A.

<sup>4</sup>Charm., 174C.

<sup>5</sup>Rep. I, 334B; cf. Charm., 175C.

<sup>6</sup>Meno, 80E.

original thesis that virtue is knowledge.<sup>1</sup> For accepting the assumption that virtue is knowledge absolute in kind, the conclusion is inevitable that virtue is not found among men. And Socrates, too, is without virtue, since he disclaims such knowledge.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, "men are not good by nature" in any case,<sup>3</sup> and knowledge is not a gift of nature.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, there are no teachers and no disciples of virtue.<sup>5</sup> But, says Plato, look abroad and you will see that the beginnings of a science of knowledge and of an ethical society are already visible. There are good men in Athens who are the sons of noble sires,<sup>6</sup> despite the taint of men like Gorgias and the apparent failure of Athenians in teaching their sons virtue.<sup>7</sup> Socrates must not be too ready to speak evil of them.<sup>8</sup> Something must be wrong in the assumption that knowledge (of a certain kind) is the sole condition of virtuous conduct.<sup>9</sup> For certain purposes, at least, there is a kind of wisdom which is quite as profitable in action as knowledge. The common virtues of right opinion contain a large element of truth.<sup>10</sup> "Then true opinion is not less reliable as a guide to correct action than wisdom, and this is the point which we overlooked in our speculation upon the nature of virtue, when we said that wisdom is the only guide to right action; whereas there is also true opinion."<sup>11</sup> Caird states the main contention exactly: "Opinion must furnish at least the starting-point of investigation; and if there were no truth in it, truth in ethics could never be attained at all."<sup>12</sup>

So much may be said in favor of ordinary opinion without neglecting important distinctions. It is a kind of go-between; opinion is intermediate between knowledge and ignorance, and it points directly to a faculty in the soul correlated with the world of becoming.<sup>13</sup> It is not an anomaly, therefore, to find opinion closely related with knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Plato is careful to point out that they are not to be identified.<sup>15</sup> Opinions are like runaway slaves, useful while they remain, but they do not 'stay put.' They are valuable when "fastened by the bond of a cause,"

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 87C, 89D, E, 95C.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 71A, B, 80D.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 89A.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 98C.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 89D, E, 95C, 96E-97A.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 93A, 96D.

<sup>7</sup>Rep. V, 477E, 478A-B, D, 479D, E, 480A; VII, 519C.

<sup>8</sup>Phileb., 60D, 64A; Theaet., 206C, et passim.

<sup>9</sup>Meno., 97 B; Rep. V, 477B, E, 479D.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 95C.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 94E.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 96E.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 98C.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 97B.

<sup>15</sup>Op. cit., p. 89.



which bond is acknowledged to be recollection.<sup>1</sup> But inasmuch as opinion is not knowledge and, strictly speaking, cannot be taught, and does not come by nature, the virtue which is based upon it is an instinct given by God to the virtuous.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, opinion does not attain the validity of knowledge, but it is in a very real sense non-empirical; there are constantly imbedded in it rational hypotheses. The virtue which is based upon opinion cannot be accounted for, neither as knowledge nor as the sum total of particular experiences. Common sense experience is a semi-coherent organization, but its rational principles are not yet fully developed. Ordinary statesmen have guided states by a wisdom which comes 'by chance;' this wisdom is to politics what divination is to religion. The wise and good men of Athens are divine men, inspired and illumined by God; like the poets, they speak many grand things, although they do not fully comprehend what they say.<sup>3</sup> There are principles at work in all experience of which common sense does not dream. These principles cannot be discovered by an analysis of psychological processes. The whole life of reason or the nature of the soul is not completely expressed within the limits of any single act. The morality of common sense has something 'divine' in it just because it has non-empirical elements in it which have not yet attained the status of rational knowledge. And although it is incomplete,<sup>4</sup> it is the virtue of a potential knowledge which contains at once the condition and the promise of a fully developed morality; the spiritual principle of reason is at work within it. No human experience is negligible, because reason is the universal principle which makes it an experience at all.<sup>5</sup> And so for Plato: "It is never of slight consequence to have the reputation for being good or to lack it. The masses are not so unsettled about the nature of virtue, nor about the difference between bad and good men. Evil men have a divine instinct for good guessing; even the utterly depraved form correct notions and judgments of the differences between better and inferior men."<sup>6</sup> Plato saw what Socrates did not, the far-reaching and positive significance of common sense morality.

From another angle Plato emphasized the spiritual nature of the

<sup>1</sup>*Meno*, 98A; cf., 99A.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 99E-100A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 99C-D.

<sup>4</sup>*Phaedo*, 82B; *Rep.* V, 479E; X, 619C.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Green, T. H., *Prolegomena*, p. 41 (fifth edition).

<sup>6</sup>*Laws*, XII, 950B-C.

soul by opposing the neo-Pythagorean doctrine of the soul as a harmony of the body. He could not accept this refinement upon the naturalistic philosophers, where the unifying principle of experience was conceived as a ratio between the different elements. Early Greek philosophy was encrusted with materialistic elements, and, although the soul was conceived as a distinct entity, it continued to regard the soul as material. The 'attunement' notion of the soul represents a historical reaction of certain neo-Pythagoreans against their master, a tendency to curtail his ideas in the direction of popular modes of thought.<sup>1</sup> To many the argument for the natural and dependent origin of the soul had every appearance of plausibility. When it was advanced against Plato's notion of the self-dependent spiritual nature of the soul, it introduced a chilling uncertainty into the argument and seemed to pre-empt the field.<sup>2</sup> Echeocrates speaks for all the neo-Pythagoreans present: "What argument can we ever trust again? How exceedingly credible the one which Socrates advanced, but which is now fallen into disbelief."<sup>3</sup>

What is the conception in question? Simmias of Thebes gives one version of it. He employs the analogy of harmony and the lyre, which he interprets as the import of Socrates's argument from the superiority of the soul over the natural body. "The harmony itself must be somewhere; the wood and the strings must decay before the harmony is affected. Doubtless, Socrates, this thought has occurred to you as the conception of the soul which we maintain; when the body is strung and held together by heat and cold, wet and dry, and the like, the soul is a proportionate admixture and harmony of these elements. Then if the soul is really a harmony, it follows that wherever the body is unduly unstrung or overstrained by diseases or any other malevolence, the soul begins at once to dissolve, notwithstanding its most divine essence. This is parallel with the harmonies of music and of other works of art, although the material remains of each body may last a considerable time before it is burned or decayed."<sup>4</sup> Cebes elaborates this position.<sup>5</sup> Just as the weaver outlives many coats, so the soul is enduring in comparison with the weak and transient body. For while the soul is alive, it constantly repairs the wasting away of the body, whereas apart from it the body rapidly decomposes and decays. But grant the persistence of the

<sup>1</sup>Burnet, *Op. cit.*, pp. 87 f., 92 f., 153.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedo*, 88C.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 88D.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 86B-C.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 91C-D.



soul through many cycles of life, if you will, is it unreasonable to suppose that its energy will at length become dissipated in the labors of successive births? Of course, no one of us will know when the final dissolution comes, not having had experience of it.<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that Plato rehabilitates the argument by means of the doctrine of recollection,<sup>2</sup> the one premise which was accepted by all parties to the discussion.<sup>3</sup> If this doctrine be accepted, it shows that the analogy is misleading when applied to the soul.<sup>4</sup> So far from being dependent upon bodily elements, the soul exercises constraint and rules over impulse and passion.<sup>5</sup> The soul is no more to be found in the elements of the body or any combination of them, than God is confined to any particular shrine or any such aggregation. Reason is the inner master-principle, self-sufficient and subject to its own law.<sup>6</sup> The soul is not a resultant of naturalistic processes in the sense that harmony follows the proper manufacture of an instrument.

In a more positive way, Plato develops the idea of the soul as an independent spiritual power in connection with the doctrine of recollection. Reminiscence points to a time when the pre-existent soul beheld Beauty (reality is always beautiful to Plato) before it was enshrined in its living tomb, now that we are imprisoned in a body, like an oyster in a shell.<sup>7</sup> The proposition upon which

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 87A-88B.

<sup>2</sup>The Taylor-Burnet theory concerning the mythological character of the 'historical Socrates' is too important to be treated in a footnote. I am obliged to state, however, that I do not agree that Socrates is a Pythagorean, and that Plato, e.g., in the *Phaedo*, is only transmitting the doctrines of his former associate and teacher. On the contrary, the Pythagorean doctrines in the *Dialogues* seem to me a distinctively Platonic contribution, and this Pythagorean element lies at the basis of the vast difference in viewpoint between the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*. If the "real impiety of Socrates" was in his adherence to a *religio non licita*, it remains to be shown that these doctrines were not his own interpretations and modifications of current Orphism which popular opinion confused with the foreign and forbidden cult, if hostilities were actually declared upon Pythagoreanism. Or granting that such was the impiety of Socrates, and that it had a basis in fact, must we therefore assume that the interpretation of Pythagorean doctrines, so prominent in the *Phaedo*, is Socratic rather than Platonic? Furthermore, does not this theory explain the historical Socrates, "so long obliterated by ignorance and prejudice," at the cost of leaving on our hands a greater mystery, viz., Plato himself? See, A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, Series first; John Burnet's edition of the *Phaedo*.

<sup>3</sup>*Phaedo*, 92A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 93B, C, 94A.

<sup>5</sup>*Phaedo.*, 250B-C; cf. *Gorg.*, 493A; *Rep.* X, 611C; *Crat.*, 403E.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 94B-E.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Laws* X, 896B-C.

Plato stands firm is: "Our souls must have existed before entering the form of a man, *i.e.*, apart from the body, and they had intelligence."<sup>1</sup> Recollection is the only argument advanced in the *Meno* for the immortality<sup>2</sup> of the soul, and is introduced there in connection with the doctrine that the mind brings with it all the presuppositions of knowledge. We quote the important part of the passage. "Wherefore, the soul being immortal, and having been born many times, having seen all things on earth and in the invisible world, necessarily has knowledge of them all. So, then, it is not remarkable that the soul should recollect all it has previously known about virtue and all other things. Inasmuch as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, nothing hinders from recovering, or as men say, learning everything out of a single recollection (*ἐν μόνον ἀναμνησθέντα*), provided only that one is courageous and faints not in his search. For the whole of investigation and learning is recollection."<sup>3</sup>

Here is a clear-cut disavowal of the current psychological dualism between the mind and its object. The mind is not a correlative term with isolated objects, which it may conceive in an external and incidental fashion. In all knowledge the mind introduces its own principles of arrangement, and mind can comprehend its object because it is cognate with the reality of natural phenomena. The mind is ever in contact with an objective and significant world of ideas, which to Plato comprises reality. In the language of Caird: "The metaphor of 'Reminiscence' is a convenient way of bringing before us the idea that the acquisition of knowledge is not a process of putting something into the mind *ab extra*, but the evolution of something involved in its own nature."<sup>4</sup> In a certain sense, the scepticism of the sophists and of Socrates is to Plato a manufactured article. They assumed a dualism between the mind and the objectively real world, whereas Plato rid himself of the problem by discarding their original dualistic assumption. The supposition of external relations between the mind and real objects seemed to him a falsification of the nature both of the soul and of the Ideas.<sup>5</sup> The primary function of reason is to know comprehensively the Ideas; the wise man is a lover of truth and he has

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 76C.

<sup>2</sup>For Plato, immortality of the soul is not a question of continued existence, as in a temporal series. Immortality symbolizes a quality of life which transcends the phenomenal series.

<sup>3</sup>81C-D.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Caird, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.



an enthusiasm for reality wherever he finds it. Reminiscence points to the basis of that enthusiasm in the kinship of the mind with reality. On the other hand, Platonic Ideas are dynamic<sup>1</sup> and knowable. Essence, knowledge, and truth are all of the same degree.<sup>2</sup> "We are fully confident that if we view the matter from every angle, absolute being is absolutely knowable."<sup>3</sup> Philosophers distinguish themselves as those who comprehend each thing in its true nature.<sup>4</sup> It would be difficult to find more explicit statements of the organic unity of mind and reality. "If the truth of things is in our souls, and the soul is immortal, then must we be of good courage, trying to inquire and recollect what is not known to us at present—this is what recollection signifies."<sup>5</sup> The dualism of Socrates and the sophists between subject and object is epistemological; Plato's dualism is metaphysical, a dualism between tangible phenomena, cognate with the body, and the invisible real world, cognate with reason.

The doctrine of reminiscence, then, is a direct indication of the intrinsic power of the mind and of its organic relation to the whole of reality. Reminiscence stirs the highest part of the soul with extreme eagerness to view the "plain of truth."<sup>6</sup> Love for the Ideas is awakened by the sight of beautiful forms, and initiates the impulse within the soul to fly away.<sup>7</sup> The newly initiated is thrilled in the presence of the higher beauties of earth; the old awe steals over him until his whole being is pierced and maddened by celestial love.<sup>8</sup> Plato is fond of describing the near side of recollection of the Idea as a 'burning pain.'<sup>9</sup> Recollection reveals the deepest nature of the soul in its kinship with the eternal and self-dependent world of Ideas. Because this kinship is so fundamental, it is not a hot-house method for attaining reality; the process is long and difficult.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the multitude of mankind stop short of the goal; the earthly copies of the Ideas are dim; the images are seen, but not known.<sup>11</sup> Celestial love is the line of communication which enables man to share the life of God.<sup>12</sup> He who employs

<sup>1</sup>Cook, A. B., *Metaphysical Basis of Plato's Ethics*, devotes nearly the whole volume to the question of the relation between Mind and Ideas.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* IX, 585C.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* V, 477A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* V, 480A.

<sup>5</sup>*Meno*, 86B.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 251B; *Sympos.*, 215D, 218A; *Rep.* VII, 515E; *Meno*, 80A.

<sup>7</sup>*Phaedr.*, 249A.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 250A; *Rep.* VI, 507B.

<sup>9</sup>*Phaedr.*, 248B.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 249D.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 251A-252A.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 253A.

aright the memories of Ideas "is ever being initiated into perfect mysteries and alone becomes truly perfect."<sup>1</sup>

The conception of an objective and universal order of Ideas and of the essential kinship of the soul with that world opens up a new vista through which Plato's conception of the soul becomes clearer. The point toward which he is moving is that whatever may be affirmed about the essential nature of the Ideas is also true of the nature of the soul. The relation between the two is organic, and they cannot be separated without doing violence to the nature of both. But what does this organic relationship imply? For one thing, Platonic Ideas constitute the real world. Just how Plato conceives that reality is another question. The important thing is that Ideas stand for reality everywhere. Moral values are a part of that objective order. Goodness of character comes by the appropriation of values which are in a sense 'given.' This is just what the sophists denied. "The true is what is agreed upon for the time being and so long as the agreement lasts,"<sup>2</sup> is the way in which Plato summarizes one version of their view of reality. Or again: "The good is one thing by nature and another by law, and the principles of justice (morality) have absolutely no basis in nature; men are continually disputing them with each other and readjusting them. These alterations effected by art and by laws have authority each in turn and for the time being; really, they are artifacts and unnatural."<sup>3</sup> The promoters of such doctrines are the natural philosophers against whom Plato inveighed.<sup>4</sup> Of them he wrote: "Nearly all of them are ignorant of the nature of the soul and of the power which it possesses. They do not know that it is prior to other things, and especially to Becoming; in fact, it is among the first principles, prior to all bodies, and is the chief source of their changes and of every transformation."<sup>5</sup> Not the least of their failures is this inversion of the relation of soul and body.<sup>6</sup> In behalf of the conception of the primacy of the soul as a non-natural power, the 'Athenian' in the *Laws* is willing to risk his life.<sup>7</sup> Plato will have it that the soul is of one and the same nature with the Ideas, the objective and eternally real. He reverses the procedure of the sophists in this connection. They defined values in terms of satisfaction for the transient sense life of human beings; Plato defined values in their organic relation with universal

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 249C.

<sup>2</sup>*Theaet.* 172B.

<sup>3</sup>*Laws* X, 889E-890A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* X, 890A.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* X, 892A.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* X, 891C, E, 892A-B; *Tim.*, 46D.

<sup>7</sup>892E.



reality. The good is not what satisfies physical desires; it is what the innermost nature of the soul appropriates from the Idea-world with which reason is akin.

The *Symposium* describes the Idea-world under the symbolism of Beauty. Its primary character is "beauty absolute, independent, and eternal; all other beauties partake of it in such a manner that while their forms ever come into being and then perish, Beauty itself neither increases nor diminishes, nor suffers any change;" it is absolute, self-dependent, constant, and eternal.<sup>1</sup> The good, sometimes used as the comprehensive principle of the world of Ideas, is the abiding source of both knowledge and being.<sup>2</sup> It is the Idea which gives "light to all."<sup>3</sup> Its test is self-sufficiency and perfection.<sup>4</sup> Now, the dignity and worth of the soul is attested by the fact that it is cognate with the Idea. Truth is the sustenance of the soul; ignorance makes it waste in inanition. We see this illustrated in the life of the philosopher. A genuine lover of learning strives after true Being. "He will not rest in the multiplicity which is appearance. He goes on with keen and unabated love until he reaches the essence of each thing, to which such a soul is akin by nature; drawing near and penetrating true being, he begets mind and truth, he knows and truly lives and grows; this is the goal of his travail."<sup>5</sup> And in cultivating the kinship of reason with the Ideas, the philosopher becomes like the object of his affection. The contemplation of Ideas exerts a generative force within experience. "If a man had vision of true beauty—the divine beauty, unalloyed and unclogged by the pollutions of mortality, communing with and really comprehending that Beauty, he would bring forth not images of virtue, but the reality of it, inasmuch as he has hold of reality and not of an image. Bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, he becomes the friend of God and immortal, if mortal may. Would that be an ignoble life?"<sup>6</sup>

Hegel's statement that in Plato the immortality of the soul is based primarily upon its kinship with the world of Ideas is fully justified.<sup>7</sup> The celestial love of the soul for the world of Ideas is far removed from the cold intellectualism of Socrates.<sup>8</sup> Eros is an ecstatic experience, if you will, a divine madness.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>211A-B.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 540A.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* VI, 805E, 509B.

<sup>4</sup>*Phileb.*, 67A.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* VI, 490B; cf., VI, 500C; *Tim.*, 47B-C.

<sup>6</sup>*Sympos.*, 212A; cf. *Phaedr.*, 247C-E, 249A.

<sup>7</sup>*History of Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup>Gomperz, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 18. <sup>9</sup>*Phaedr.*, 244A, 249D.

The soul is loath to diminish its communion with reality. When that relationship first becomes strained, it is the hour of supreme agony of the soul.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is described with all the fervor of a high emotion.<sup>2</sup> The bond of communion between reason and the Idea is philosophic love. Eros is the son of 'poverty' and 'plenty.'<sup>3</sup> Love's dynamic nature enables it to mediate the relation between the divine and the mortal.<sup>4</sup> "In him all are bound together."<sup>5</sup> And so celestial love is the mortal enthusiasm for the everlasting possession of the good.<sup>6</sup> Eros expresses *Der Drang nach Wahrheit* which is part of the original endowment of the soul. The true nature of reason is its love for Ideas, the impulse to go out of itself in order to appropriate what is universally real. It is an attitude of appropriation and possession. The following passage illustrates this fact very clearly. "For he who would proceed aright in this matter must begin in youth to visit beautiful objects; and first of all, if he is properly guided by his instructor, let him love only one such object, and therefrom create appropriate ideas; and soon he will of himself perceive that beauty of one object is cognate with the beauty of another; and if beauty in form is his quest, how foolish not to recognize that beauty is one and the same in all beautiful objects! And having perceived this fact he will bestow his love upon all beautiful forms, and will restrain his excessive fondness for this one object, discounting it and deeming it a small thing. The next step is to comprehend that beauty of mind is more honorable than beauty of outward form, so that if a virtuous soul possess but a little grace, he will be pleased to love and nurture that soul, seeking to bring to birth such conceptions as will improve the young, until he is compelled to behold anew beauty in institutions and in laws, and to understand that all beauty belongs to the self-same family, so that finally he will see that personal beauty is an insignificant thing. After institutions, he will advance to the sciences, that once more he may behold their beauty, and no longer looking intently upon the beauty of a single object, like a servant who is in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave base and narrow-minded, but approaching and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will beget many noble and magnificent ideas and concepts in unstinted love of wisdom. Thus he will proceed, growing and increasing in strength until, on that distant shore, he grasps the complete science

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 247B.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 202D, 203D.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 248A-B.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 203A.

<sup>5</sup>*Sympos.*, 203B.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 206A.



of universal beauty."<sup>1</sup> In contrast with the objectivity of celestial love Plato gives a sketch of its opposite, *viz.*, earthly love. "He who is the servant of his desires and the slave of pleasure, necessarily sets about making his beloved the most agreeable to himself. Now, everything is pleasant to the diseased mind which is not opposed to it, but the equal or superior is hateful. The lover will not voluntarily submit to any equality or superiority in his beloved; he is ever reducing him to inferiority and submission. An ignorant man is inferior to the wise, the coward to the courageous, the slow of speech to the speaker, the dull to the clever. Now when these defects, and many more, as a work of nature afflict the mind of the beloved, the lover is necessarily pleased at their presence. Otherwise he must proceed to implant them at the risk of being deprived of his fleeting pleasure. The lover cannot avoid jealousy, and he deprives his beloved of all associations and advantages that would make a real man of him; and this is a source of great harm to the beloved. But the greatest hurt arises from excluding the beloved from that society which would make him the wisest. Divine philosophy is that association from which the lover must isolate his beloved, through fear of being despised by him. In every way the lover contrives how his beloved shall be wholly ignorant and absolutely dependent; such a beloved is the highest joy to his lover, but the greatest curse to himself. Therefore, the lover is an unprofitable guardian and companion in all that relates to the mental life."<sup>2</sup>

In the *Phaedo* and in parts of the *Republic* the non-empirical character of the soul is stressed by elaborating the antagonism between reason and sensibility, the inner and the outer phases of experience. Plato sharpens the opposition of the rational and the sensible in experience to the end that the spiritual nature of the moral self may become prominent. And here it is appropriate to recall that Plato shares the human limitation of being unable to say more than one thing at one time. It is now the *negative* side of experience which confronts us. An observation so commonplace will throw light upon the objection of 'philosophical absolutism' in Plato's thought of which Gomperz complains.<sup>3</sup> We have seen that philosophy is the ascent of the soul through the continual affirmation of its own right to share the world of Ideas. The other side of the shield exhibits philosophy as the renunciation of

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 210A-D.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedr.*, 238E-239C.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 122.

all that is tinged with sense. But what means this notion of 'dying to live' so strange to the ear of commonsense? Is it not a mirth provoking idea?<sup>1</sup> Surely it is, if one follows the philistine practice of assuming that a term has just a single meaning and that the obvious one. In paradoxical language, by 'death' the wise man means 'life,' because then the soul is completely itself. Death is just the separation of soul and body, nothing more.<sup>2</sup> Commonsense is too ready to assume that the soul is dependent upon the body, and that the whole truth about the soul is told in sense categories. The transient life of sense is most obvious, but for that reason it may be the most external and incidental phenomenon of experience. The philosopher sees through the surface features and recognizes the positive processes of life and spirit, without which dissolution and death would be forever a mystery. And so Socrates cheerfully faces execution; death of this kind is only a spectacular and violent expression of what has been a conscious and positive practice throughout many years. The simple truth in this dark saying is: "Those who worthily apply themselves to philosophy are apt to be misunderstood by other men, because the true disciple practices nothing else than death and dying."<sup>3</sup> This *μελέτη θανάτου* means cultivation of the highest part of the soul; it is purification. "Now purification is just this, as the argument has shown long ago: the separation of the soul from the body as far as possible, the practice of the soul collecting itself and returning to itself from every bodily contact. Living alone to the utmost degree, both in this life and in the hereafter, the soul frees itself from the chains of the body."<sup>4</sup> Wherefore death is not a fearful thing.<sup>5</sup> The philosopher has always despised the pleasures and adornments of the body.<sup>6</sup> All experience is haunted by intimations of what is incomprehensible by sense. The material object is ever supplemented by the mental concept. The senses can only assist in the recovery of certain absolute and changeless notions which the soul has always known; this is recollection.<sup>7</sup> The life of the soul is in the knowledge of, or communion with, the Ideas.<sup>8</sup> This is the goal of life. The soul of the philosopher is eager to dwell in the contemplation of reason, beholding the divine and true, whence it derives nourishment. "Thus the soul seeks to live

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 64B.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 64C, 67 D; *Gorg.*, 524B, D, E, 526B.

<sup>3</sup>*Phaedo*, 64A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 67C-D.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 67E.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 64D-E.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 73C, D, 75E, 76A.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 65A, C, D, 67C.



while in this world, and at death goes to its own kindred, and to its likeness, freed from all human ills."<sup>1</sup> In the world of sense the soul at best can only see its own kindred and likeness through a glass darkly.

A part of the meaning of 'dying to live' is that reason protests against the acceptance of the immediate values of sense. The philosopher has a passionate love for the ideas whose images he observes in the world.<sup>2</sup> He is wise who is always breaking through appearance to reality, trying to go beyond the many to the one, through the transient to the permanent. He recognizes everywhere the Idea, "and is able to distinguish the Idea from the objects which participate in it; he does not confuse the objects with the Idea, nor the Idea with the objects. Does such a man live as a dreamer, or is he awake?"<sup>3</sup> He cannot rest within the confines of ordinary opinion; he must know.<sup>4</sup> Lover that he is, he must embrace reality and be at one with it.<sup>5</sup> Common sense takes exception to this disdainful attitude toward ordinary experience with its certain facts of eye and ear.<sup>6</sup> The philosopher has an explanation. The realm of opinion is cognate with the manifold world of becoming. Reason discredits only the false claim of sense, seeking a complete grasp of the truth. Opinion is lighter than ignorance and darker than knowledge, but is on the way to it.<sup>7</sup> Still, the refusal to accept sense-experience at its face value does tend to isolate one from the world of affairs.<sup>8</sup> When once the mind has seen the world of light and conceived things in their true relations, it cannot readily readjust itself to the world of opinion. And if philosophers were forced to compete with the prisoners in the den of sensibility, in measuring the world of shadows, they would make a ridiculous spectacle. It would be said of such a man "he ascended on high only to return without his eyes, and it isn't worth while going up. Should he attempt to free another and lead him to the light, and people could only lay hands upon him, would they not put him to death?"<sup>9</sup>

The physical philosophers conceived the soul after the analogy of the bodily life. Plato begins, so to speak, on the reverse side, with an objective and living world of Ideas with which the soul is cognate. In the life of communion with true Being, the sensible

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 84A-B.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* V, 475E.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* V, 476D.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* V, 479E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 490A-B; VII, 538A-539D.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* V, 476E.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* V, 478C-E, 479A-B.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 500B-C.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 517A.

and material cannot share. By this mode of expression Plato leaves no ground for doubting the non-material and self-sufficient life of the soul. When experience is at its best, he tells us reason in the philosopher goes unaccompanied to greet its object. "With the understanding alone he penetrates sun-clear the object and tries to grasp the truth of existence; he has put away, so far as he can, eyes and ears, in short, the whole body; for he considers it a disturbing factor which hinders the soul, whenever it accompanies her, from attaining truth and comprehension."<sup>1</sup> Ideas, the essence of things, are imperceptible to any and all of the senses. "All of our experience indicates that if we ever come to any pure knowledge, we must quit the body, and with the soul alone see things as they are. Then, in all probability, we shall have the wisdom for which we long, and of which we profess to be the lovers; not while we live, but only after death, as the argument indicates. For if the soul cannot have pure knowledge while in company with the body, one of two things is plain: either knowledge is not attainable, or only after death. For then and only then shall the soul be parted from the body and return to itself."<sup>2</sup> Here is the deeper meaning of the paradox: 'die to live.' The wise man welcomes dying as the way into life. "And thus purified by separation from the body's thoughtlessness we shall be like unto the purified, and by the power of our own souls shall know everything sun-clear; this is doubtless to know the truth. For nothing impure is allowed to approach the pure. And it is likely that in this life we shall approach nearest to knowledge, if to the utmost we refuse association and communion with the body. Our greatest need is not to become surfeited with the bodily nature, but to remain pure from it until God himself shall release us."<sup>3</sup> Now knowledge is used here in the broad sense of comprehension and insight into the significance of human experience. This is the knowledge in which virtue finds its roots; it is the same kind of knowledge which alone can give the proper direction and meaning to any aspect of life. In the thought of Plato, experience is organic; whatever interferes with the function of reason in one direction affects the whole. "Whenever the soul employs the body in any investigation, either by sight or hearing, or any other sense,—employing the body in an investigation is identical with the use of the senses—then it is dragged by the body into the realm of ceaseless change where the

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 66A.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedo*, 66D; cf., 65D, E; *Rep.* VII, 517B.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 67A-B.



soul wanders and is confused; the soul is dizzy-headed like a drunken creature, when it establishes contact with the changeable."<sup>1</sup> The senses are full of deception.<sup>2</sup> It is just the limitations of sense which incite the activity of reason.<sup>3</sup> "As long as we are in the body, the soul is permeated by such a mass of evil, that we shall never attain completely our hearts' desire; our search is after truth."<sup>4</sup>

Plato's conception of the relative values of soul and body is indicated by his designation of the latter as a prison-house of the former. The temporary union of soul and body is the meeting-place of two radically opposed natures. "The soul is the very likeness of the divine, the immortal, the intellectual; it is of permanent form, and indissoluble, and changeless, and eternally the same."<sup>5</sup> The body, on the contrary, is the veritable grave of the spiritual life, with which the soul never had any voluntary association.<sup>6</sup> In certain circles the saying is current: *σῶμα ἐστὶ σῆμα*, the body is a tomb.<sup>7</sup> Plato adapts the notion. In their practice of death, true philosophers are ever accusing the body, and desire the soul to be rid of this dead-weight.<sup>8</sup> The body introduces all kinds of impediments to the life of reason. Plato's words convey his meaning best. "The body is a source of endless trouble in its requirement of nurture. Moreover, it is liable to diseases which hinder us in the search after true Being. It loads us down with loves, lusts, fears, and every sort of fancy; in fact, as the saying goes, it brings about a condition where we do no thinking at all."<sup>9</sup> Reason and sensibility are in inverse ratio. "Each pleasure and pain, as if it were a spike, nails and rivets the soul to the body, fashioning it into a bodily form so that it believes that whatever the body affirms to be true, is true. This agreement with and delight in bodily perceptions, methinks, obliges the soul to have the same haunts and nurture, and renders the soul unlikely to arrive in the unseen world purified; the soul is always infected with the body, so that she sinks into another body where it springs up like

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 79C.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 65B, 83A, B; *Rep.* VII, 523C, 524D; VI, 507E.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* V, 475C; VII, 524D, E; *Theaet.*, 155D.

<sup>4</sup>*Phaedo*, 66B; cf. *Tim.*, 69C, D; *Rep.* IV, 436A, 439D.

<sup>5</sup>*Phaedo*, 80B; cf. 79B, E, 84A-B.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 80E.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 62B, 82E; *Phaedr.*, 250C; *Gorg.*, 493A; *Crat.*, 400C.

<sup>8</sup>*Phaedo*, 67E-68A, 80E.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 64B-C; cf. *Laws* I, 645D, E, 646A.

a seed. In this way the soul is bereft of communion with the divine, the purified, the unchanging."<sup>1</sup>

The association of mind and body contaminates the purity of the soul's nature; in fact, it mars the soul beyond recognition. "The true nature of the soul cannot be seen when it is marred by conjunction with the body and with other evils as we now behold it. You must contemplate it in abstraction, pure, by the eye of reason; then the soul's exceeding beauty will appear . . . Thus far we have viewed it as those who look upon the sea-god Glaucus, and are scarcely able to distinguish his original nature. The natural members of his body are broken off and crushed, and altogether mutilated by the waves; shell and sea-weed and stone have encrusted them; the result is that the sea-god resembles a monster much more than his own natural form. Likewise, the soul which we see is imbedded in a myriad ills."<sup>2</sup> The body pollutes the soul whenever the latter becomes the servant member in the association. Sometimes the soul becomes so "bewitched by bodily desires and pleasure that nothing seems to express truth except corporeal forms which one can handle and see and taste and use for bodily lusts."<sup>3</sup> After death, the impure souls, cloyed by bodily infections, remain visible. They prowling about tombs and sepulchres. At length, they are re-incarnate bodies of a kind fitting the characters they were wont to pursue in life.<sup>4</sup> Milton develops the same thought:

'But when lust,

By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose,  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,  
Lingering and sitting by a new made grave,  
As loth to leave the body that it loved,  
And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state."<sup>5</sup>

What ordinary opinion is accustomed to regard as human life is really 'serving time' in a cave where shadows are mistaken for reality; it is the shadow world of sense.<sup>6</sup> Look and you shall see human beings living in an underground den which has a mouth

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 83D-E.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* X, 611C-D.

<sup>3</sup>*Phaedo*, 81B-C; cf. 83C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 81C-E.

<sup>5</sup>*Comus*, 463 ff.

<sup>6</sup>*Rep.* VII, 514A-515C.



open toward the light, and extending the length of the cave. From childhood, these persons have inhabited this place, with their legs and necks chained so that they can only see what is before them; the chains do not permit them to turn their heads. Above and behind them at a distance a fire is burning brightly. Between the fire and the prisoners is a raised way, parallel with which you can see a low-built wall. Alongside the wall and on the raised way men are passing and carrying all sorts of vessels, statues and figures. Some of these men are conversing; others are silent. The prisoners see only the shadows of the moving figures which the fire throws upon the wall. In this cave of illusion the inmates fancy that they are looking upon real objects and hearing real voices. Such is the unenlightened state of our nature. The majority of men are content with this shadowy existence; they differ from children only in respect of the force and tenacity with which they cling to their shadow-world, and the fierceness with which they revile their deliverers. For education is, after all, a deliverance. It is not importing facts, putting sight into blind eyes; nor is it enlightening the intellect; the whole soul must be turned about to the light. The entire life of sense must be curtailed and brought into conformity with the divine element of wisdom.<sup>1</sup> "The argument shows that the power and capacity for learning is present in every soul; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to the light without the whole body, so too must the instrument of knowledge be turned about with the whole soul from the world of Becoming, until it becomes able to endure the sight of Being, and of the clearest of Being which we call the Good."<sup>2</sup> Education is only turning the soul face about toward reality, because by nature the soul is akin to the real world.

From one point of view, the development of the notion that the body is the grave of the soul seems to work at cross-purpose with Plato's avowed aim. The effort to maintain the essentially different nature, and the superiority, of the soul over against the body by means of a comparison between them which shows the body in such unfavorable light, strikes us as somewhat incongruous. The very unreality of the body, and its comparative worthlessness, undermines the force of the contrast by which the dignity and superiority of the soul's nature would shine forth. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how the sublime and spiritual nature of the soul could become contaminated by an alien and physical body.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 518D-519B.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 518C.

If the nature of the body is so foreign to that of the soul that the former is a tomb for the spirit, whence arises the body's subtle influence during the time of their association? How is this influence consistent with the idea that the soul is a self-sufficient and self-determining power?<sup>1</sup> Put in that form, a problem arises which Plato made no attempt to answer. His interest in the *soma-sema* doctrine consists in emphasizing the difference between the soul and the body.

The incongruity of this doctrine is apparently involved also in the idea that the function of philosophy is to work our deliverance from the body and the soul's purification. Philosophy effects the ascent of the soul from darkness of the sense-world to the true day of changeless reality;<sup>2</sup> turning the soul from the illusions of pleasure to the contemplation of the Good.<sup>3</sup> The process of *katharsis* concurs with the philosopher's special aim of being delivered from the body.<sup>4</sup> But is not both the aim and the deliverance vain, inasmuch as the relation of soul and body is more or less external? Yet that is the work Plato assigns to philosophy. "The lovers of learning know that philosophy takes absolute control of the soul which has been glued and fastened to the body, where it is compelled to consider reality (*τὰ ὄντα*) through prison bars, but not in the soul's own right. The soul wallows in every ignorance, and philosophy sees the relentlessness of the prison made by lust, the more so as the soul is the accomplice in its own incarceration. I repeat, lovers of learning know that philosophy takes possession of the soul in this plight and by gentle persuasion tries to release it, pointing out that sight, hearing and all the other senses are full of deception; philosophy persuades the soul to depart from all these, except from their necessary use, and urges the soul to retire and converse with itself alone, trusting solely in its own power whenever it contemplates pure reality in pure apprehension. Whatever comes by other channels is changeable, is not of the truth; such objects are tangible and visible, but what the soul beholds is intelligible and invisible. The soul of the true philosopher is convinced that it ought not resist this deliverance, and so he abstains from pleasures, desires, pains, and

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedr.*, 245C ff., 247B; *Phaedo*, 105D ff.; *Rep.* X, 610E; *Tim.*, 89A; *Laws* X, 894C ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* VII, 521C.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 518E, 519B, 520C, 534C; V, 476C-D.

<sup>4</sup>*Phaedo*, 64E, 67A, C, 80E, 82D, 83E, 81A; *Apol.*, 40E; *Laws* VIII, 828D.



fears, as far as possible; reflecting that when any one experiences exceeding joys, or fears, or sorrows, or desires, he suffers from these things not only such evils as he may anticipate: sickness or loss of property to satisfy his lusts, but the very greatest of all evils—one with which he does not reckon."<sup>1</sup> This evil, Plato assures us, is the delusion that the objects of the most intense feelings are the most real. One thing is plain. The Platonic *meditatio mortis* is no mere theoretical dogma; it is really a means of a spiritual resurrection during life, a beginning of that complete deliverance from the bodily tomb which the soul hopes to attain at death.<sup>2</sup>

Plato summarizes the ascent of the soul through the world of sense in one of the myths of the *Phaedrus*. The passage is extremely important not only because it presents the basic dualism between reason and sensibility, but also because it intimates why reason is assured of victory from the start. No apology need be made for quoting at length. "Whenever the charioteer sees his beloved and his whole soul is warmed through sense, he is filled with the tickling and the stinging of desire. The obedient steed, then as always under the control of modesty, refrains from leaping upon the beloved; but the other steed, heedless of the charioteer's goading and lashing with the whip, plunges ahead and runs away; he furnishes all manner of trouble to his companion, and to the charioteer whom he forces to approach the beloved and to recall the joys of indulgence. At first the two indignantly oppose the baser steed and his urgency to do such terrible and lawless deeds; but at last, when there is no limit to nagging, they follow in submission and agree to do his bidding. Now they arrive at the place, and behold the shining form of the beloved; which when the charioteer sees, his memory recalls the nature of the Beautiful, and once more he sees it in company with temperance placed upon a sacred pedestal; he is fearful at the sight, and in adoration falls backward, and at the same time is compelled to draw back the reins with such violence as to bring the steeds on their haunches, the one willing and unresisting, the other insolent and unwilling. When they have both withdrawn a little way, the one is ashamed and amazed and his whole body is bathed in perspiration; the other, recovering from the distress which was caused by the bridle and the fall, and regaining his breath with difficulty, is full of wrath and reproaches, and violently abuses the driver and his fellow-steed

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 82E-83C.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 384 ff.

for timidity and cowardice in deserting their post and agreement; again he urges them against their will to advance, and scarcely grants their petition to await another time. But when the appointed time comes, and they pretend as if they had forgotten, he reminds them by pawing and neighing and drawing them on; once more with the same intention, he forces his companions to draw near the beloved. This time he lowers his head and puts up his tail, and gripping the bit with his teeth he plunges ahead shamelessly. Now the charioteer has a harder time than ever; he falls back like a racer at the barrier, and with additional force wrenches the bit from the wanton steed, covering his abusive tongue and jaws with blood; he forces his legs and haunches to the ground in severe punishment. And after the villainous steed has experienced this treatment many times he ceases his riotous way, becomes docile, and submits to the guidance of the charioteer; whenever he sees beauty he is overcome with fear. Henceforth, the soul of the lover in modesty and in holy fear attends the beloved."<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on the foregoing passage, Paul E. More points out that the power of resistance finally came from the charioteer not as a deliberative agent but as one who recognized his kinship with the Idea, and that this power strikes into him after the manner of the Christian's grace of God.<sup>2</sup> The same principle which constitutes the objectively real world operates in the life of the individual. The triumph of reason over sense is assured because it shares in the principle of universal reality.<sup>3</sup> As Windleband states it: Reason, as God or world-purpose, is an objective principle, which, as consciousness, becomes soul.<sup>4</sup> Always the final argument for the dignity and worth of the soul hinges upon its oneness with the Ideas. We cite a pertinent passage from the *Phaedo*:<sup>5</sup> "If, as we are constantly reiterating, there is the Beautiful, the Good, and every similar idea really exists, and if all sense-objects are referable to this reality, which we once knew and continue to know, and with which we compare sense-objects, then we shall be forced to the conclusion that our souls have a reality equal to that of the Idea. But if Ideas are not, this argument is vain. This is true, is it not? There is equal necessity in the pre-existence of Ideas and that of our souls; *καὶ εἰ μὴ ταῦτα, οὐδὲ τὰδε*—they stand or fall together." The *raison d'être* of the nature of the soul is divine goodness. There is

<sup>1</sup>253E-254E.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>*Phileb.*, 30A-E.

<sup>4</sup>*Platon*, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup>76D-E.



no jealousy of anything in a good God, and so he made everything as much as possible like Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Reason, then, is the one principle immanent in the world and in the individual. The creator himself mixed the immortal part of the soul, although he delegated to the lesser gods the work of creation at large.<sup>2</sup> Soul in its totality has the rule of all things inanimate and sets in order the whole world.<sup>3</sup> It is a self-conscious and self-determining energy. This is Plato's meaning in the following passage. "Soul is in every case immortal, for what is ever in motion is immortal. On the contrary, whatever moves another and is moved by another, in ceasing to move ceases also to live. Only what is self-moving, inasmuch as it never abandons itself, never ceases to move, but is also the source and beginning of motion for all other moving objects. Now a principle is unbegotten. Everything which comes into being must of necessity have a beginning in a principle, but the principle itself cannot come out of anything else: for if a principle were derived, it would no longer be a principle. But whatever is unbegotten must be indestructible; for if a principle were destroyed it could not rise into being out of anything else, nor anything else out of it, since all things must come from a principle. Therefore the principle of motion must be self-moving, and it must be neither perishable nor begotten; otherwise the whole universe and the whole creation would collapse into a static condition, and never again could it recover its motion and existence. But if we assume the self-moving to be immortal, we need not be ashamed to maintain that such is the very idea and essence of the soul. For any body whose principle of motion is outside itself is soulless, whereas the one which has its principle of motion within and of itself, has a soul and expresses the very nature of soul. And if it be true that self-motion is the very nature of soul, the soul is necessarily unbegotten and eternal."<sup>4</sup>

With the validity of this argument we are not now concerned. The whole tenor of the passage is that Plato finds it basic to his philosophy to assume that the soul is a vital principle whose determination is from within. It appears to be the doctrine of ἀρχὴ κινήσεως of the early Pythagoreans.<sup>5</sup> It is germane to Plato's main contention that the soul is of one nature with the

<sup>1</sup>Tim., 29E; cf. Phaedr., 247A.

<sup>2</sup>Phaedr., 247B.

<sup>3</sup>Tim., 39D, E, 41C, 92C.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 245C-E; cf. Laws X, 894C, D, 895C, 896A; XII, 966E.

<sup>5</sup>Burnet, *Op. cit.*, p. 333 f.

objective and eternally self-determining reality. In one passage, at least, he suggests the arrangement of the faculties or powers of the soul in an ascending scale according to the degree with which each comprehends reality.<sup>1</sup> In the vision of Er, the soul leaves the body and goes alone to judgment.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the journey in the world invisible, the soul chooses its self-determined lot of life, but αἰτία ἐλομένου—God is blameless.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the body and all else material, the soul cannot be destroyed even by its own peculiar vice of injustice.<sup>4</sup> Injustice which has power to murder others will also preserve the murderer alive—indeed, and well awake too;<sup>5</sup> so far removed is the soul's dwelling-place from the tent of mortality. The essence of the soul is life and excludes the notion of death.<sup>6</sup> The education and nurture of the soul help determine its character; its character is its destiny, and the soul must live with itself.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly Plato's thought is diametrically opposed to that of the Sophists. For the latter, values are determined by the feelings of pleasure and pain and the principle of the moral life is successful self-aggrandizement. Plato regards moral values as organic in the nature of objective reality, and the principle of virtue or goodness is cognate with universal reason. Life is rational and moral through and through; moral experience is social in character, an objective and shareable order. The gist of the standpoint is put in the concluding words of the *Republic*. "Wherefore my counsel is, believing that the soul is immortal and able to endure all things, both good and evil, that we hold fast to the upward way and wisely practise justice and virtue . . . And we shall attain our welfare both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have described."<sup>8</sup> 'Know thyself' still embodies the major part of wisdom. But the self we are to know is a rational self-sufficient principle of life akin to the world of Ideas. When we grasp the significance of this principle we shall have the moral life in outline before us. It comes about that the effort to 'strip justice bare' involves looking at the soul apart from its mortal and external accompaniments. Plato urges: "Look at the soul's philosophy and observe her converse and company, kindred as she is with the divine, the immortal and the eternal. See what it would become if it were wholly to follow the divine, and borne by this impulse were to escape from the slough in which it now finds

<sup>1</sup>Rep. VI, 511D-E.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. X, 614B.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. X, 517E.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. X, 609D.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. X, 610E.

<sup>6</sup>Phaedo, 105D-E, 106B-E.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 107C-D.

<sup>8</sup>Rep. X, 621C-D.



itself, encrusted with rocks and shells and the things of earth which in wild variety spring up around the soul, because it feeds upon the earthy and is surrounded by its so-called goods. Then one could see its own true nature, whether singular or plural in form—just what its exact nature is."<sup>1</sup> It is this divine principle of reason which, in a peculiar sense, is the consummation of the Platonic ethics. By it alone have we an objective, impartial, and universally valid criterion of goodness, the aim of every ethical system. We must now try to see this rational principle at work putting order and system into everyday conduct. What are some of the out-standing features in the life of reason, the supreme principle of morality?

<sup>1</sup>Rep. X, 611E-612A.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF REASON IN THE MORAL LIFE

The Sophists defined goodness as the sum of pleasure for the individual. The acceptance of that principle, Plato points out, would completely disorganize life both in society and in the individual. Such an ideal of life is anti-social, irrational, and immoral. The very success of injustice, Plato maintains, is due to the implicit recognition of justice. Plato found the crucial point in the sophistic morality in its reduction of the soul or moral self to terms of sensation. The good is the pleasant; moral values are determined by the sentient organism. In opposition to this sophistic viewpoint Plato described moral experience from its non-sentient or spiritual side. The essence of the soul is not in the life of sensation, but in reason, a spiritual principle cognate with an objective world-order. A passage in the *Phaedo* puts it this way: "Yes, Socrates, I am convinced that there is the same necessity for both; the argument retreats successfully to the position that the pre-existence of the soul is equally defensible with that of the Ideas. For to me, at least, nothing is so evident as that the Beautiful, the Good, and the other Ideas we mentioned are absolutely real; and I am completely satisfied with the proof."<sup>1</sup> Moral values are, above all, organic parts within a universal and self-complete order. The individual knows and appropriates the values which constitute goodness of character, because reason is also organic in that objective world of reality. Reason is the most fundamental power in human life, and by its nature all men potentially share the values of the Idea-world. Morality is then objective in the sense that its values are not made in accordance with bodily desires, and, having their foundation in reason, they are accessible to all men on equal terms. The central principle of morality is the Good. But beyond this formal concept, in what does the good life consist?

Plato uses the concept 'good' in the widest sense, which, although it does not in the first instance indicate moral qualities, is inclusive of them.<sup>2</sup> *Τὸ ἀγαθόν*, for Plato, includes three apparently dis-

<sup>1</sup>76E-77A.

<sup>2</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 218.



tinct ideas. The Good is: first, the object of all rational desire, the end of life; secondly, the principle that makes knowledge possible and the world a rational order; thirdly, the principle of being which makes possible the phenomenal world.

The Good is, first of all, what all men desire.<sup>1</sup> Men may be put off with appearance in many instances, but they insist upon the reality when dealing with the Good.<sup>2</sup> The reason is that the Good is what men most desire, the one value to which all others are subsidiary. It is the end of life, not merely as a 'far off divine event,' but as process as well; the Good is both end and means. Men are not always conscious of this principle which underlies all human activity, but "every soul of man pursues it and makes it the end of all his actions, having a presentiment that there is such an end."<sup>3</sup> In other words, Plato takes it as a kind of ultimate truth that man is a being who lives for some end or whole, that he has a good in the light of which particular goods are determined and evaluated. Moral experience is not the adding of bit upon bit, but a comprehension of the particular in the perspective of the whole of life. There is an aspect of universality which is involved in all our particular ethical judgments, but fully expressed in none of them, and which, as it is increasingly discovered, can be used to correct and complete the judgments from which it is, in part, derived.<sup>4</sup> This is only another way in which Plato says: man is a rational being. In the life of reason, mind is never submerged completely in the immediacy of experience, where each thing is taken at its face value; reason stands apart to criticize and direct its own work with a view to a more comprehensive whole. By this test Plato says you shall know the philosophic nature. If anyone loves beautiful objects and yet lacks an appreciation of absolute Beauty, and is unable to follow if one leads him to the knowledge of it, that man is a dreamer who puts the copy in place of the real object.<sup>5</sup> Nettleship states the point clearly. "The rationality of man means that he is a creature who has ideals, and who cannot help having them. An ideal is something which is not fully present at this particular moment in this particular thing, but as yet is partly attained in it. The conception of an ideal involves, on the one hand, that it is never wholly realized, on the other that it is continually being realized. However much and however often

<sup>1</sup>*Sympos.*, 204E ff.; *Gorg.*, 466D ff.; *Meno*, 77B, E, 78A; *Euthyd.*, 288E, 292B, E.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* VI, 505 D; *Phileb.*, 20D.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* VI, 505D-E.

<sup>4</sup>*Cf.* Caird, *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* V, 476C.

the object with which man acts may change, he never lives absolutely in the present; in the moment he is always thinking of something beyond the moment; and it is in virtue of reason that he does so. It is owing to this that man is what we call a moral being. He is capable of morality because he has reason, and reason compels him to live for an end; and the problem of moral philosophy to the Greeks is always, starting from this fundamental conception, to determine the true end for which a man should live."<sup>1</sup> It is evident now that Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul signify an effort to show that reason in the individual establishes the condition for a moral life whose values are organic in the nature of objective reality. In the moral life, therefore, the values of reason must take precedence over those things which yield an excess of pleasure over pain.

Turning now from the concept of reason as the principle which determines the good in the life of man, we shall see that the Good is also a postulate demanded by the ultimate nature of reality as a whole. The Good, he tells us in the *Philebus*, is none other than the Divine Reason.<sup>2</sup> In Platonic phraseology, the Good is the source of knowledge and of being, the principle which makes the world an intelligible and permanent order. On these two main points the theory of Ideas is grounded.<sup>3</sup> "That which imparts truth to the known and gives power to the knower is the Idea of the Good; it is the source of knowledge and truth in so far as the latter is the subject of knowledge. Although both knowledge and truth are beautiful, you will be right in considering the good still more beautiful. And just as in the example of light and sight, so here knowledge and truth are rightly considered to be like the good, but the good must not be identified with either one or both of them; the nature of the good is far more estimable."<sup>4</sup> To quote Nettleship again: "The use of the word implies a certain ultimate hypothesis as to the nature of things, namely that there is reason operating in the world, in man and in nature. This reason shows itself everywhere in the world in this particular way, that wherever there are a number of elements co-existent there will be found a certain unity, a certain principle which correlates them, through which alone they are what they are, and in the light of which alone they can be understood. Thus the good becomes to Plato both the ultimate condition of morality and the ultimate condition of under-

<sup>1</sup>*Lectures*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup>22C.

<sup>3</sup>Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, p. 231 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* VI, 508E-509A; *cf.*, III, 410C; *Gorg.*, 503E.



standing. These are not two things, but one and the same principle showing itself in different subject-matters."<sup>1</sup> The Good is Plato's central principle of reality, the highest of the Ideas.<sup>2</sup> And although Plato would grant that it is not fully comprehended by finite intelligence, the human reason may arrive at some vision of the good, and it is at the basis of all moral conduct. On this point Plato is explicit. "In my opinion, such is the order of appearances: the Idea of the Good is seen last of all in the intelligible world and only with difficulty, but when once seen it is inferred to be the true source of all right and beauty in everything; it is the light of the visible world and the parent of the lord of light in it; in the intellectual world it is the direct source of reason and truth. Wherefore, one who is going to act intelligently in public or private life must know the Good."<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that the Idea of the Good expresses Plato's conception of the principle of objectivity in morals. The world is a teleological whole, not in the narrow sense that nature is adapted to serve the purposes of man, but simply that the world is an organic whole in which the parts have a definite function to perform, and that it can be understood in terms of the function of the various parts; the good is the immanent principle which we have to suppose in order to explain it, and which is implied in calling the world a whole.<sup>4</sup> This conception is opposed to the sophistic interpretation of reality as it expressed itself in the individualistic theory of morals. To Plato the theory of the Sophists implied a double miracle; that a sane man could have been born in an atomistic world of self-seeking individuals, and that he could remain sane in bedlam. For as we saw in the first chapter, the naturalistic conception of man left morality without social character. Moreover, the attempt to supply that character by a compromise morality emptied life of all fixed determinations and stable values. Plato makes an important distinction: it is one thing to say that nature has a meaning, and another to say that the first meaning we find is the true one. The true meaning of nature is found in the principle of the good, and the good is always intelligible. Therefore, the basis for a social interpretation is grounded in the nature of reality. A good man is one whose life exhibits principle or purpose; it is harmony.<sup>5</sup> In so far as the several parts of a man's conduct are articulate and perform a function

<sup>1</sup>Lectures, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 279 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Rep. VII, 517B-C.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Windelband, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup>Gorg., 527B-C; Rep. IV, 443D-E.

within a larger whole, it is open to the understanding of fellow-members of society.

For, as Plato further observes, the principle of the good operates in both directions. A man's conduct becomes orderly and intelligent both to himself and to others not only in so far as it is concentrated upon a specific purpose or end, but also as it becomes comprehensive and reaches beyond the individual. The end of good conduct has a universal aspect. And although "every soul of man pursues the good," if he fails to grasp that principle, "he loses whatever good there may be in other things."<sup>1</sup> This is true, even in cases where men follow their own ideas of justice and right. Hence the guardians who are to direct the moral purpose of the community must have a firm hold upon the good.<sup>2</sup> Plato's notion is that the being and essence of each particular thing is determined by this universal principle of the good.<sup>3</sup> This is his meaning when he says that the good is the creative and sustaining cause of the world.<sup>4</sup> The *Phaedo* refers to the good as the 'condition without which the cause could not be a cause.'<sup>5</sup> In the *Philebus* the Good is conceived as the principle of order in the universe under the three aspects of beauty, truth, and proportion.<sup>6</sup> Later on this abstract Idea is represented in the personalized form of God, who makes the world after the intelligible pattern<sup>7</sup> and even in the sensible world becomes manifest to the human senses.<sup>8</sup> Of so great a principle no man can afford to be in ignorance. This is the reason why it has been said that the conception of the good is required to fill up our sketchy, fragmentary view of human life, and to give it precision (*ἀκρίβεια*). It is only when the soul looks upon the object illuminated by truth and being, that it comprehends and knows and is radiant with intelligence.<sup>9</sup> The philosopher is just the man who apprehends things in their true relations. Each particular fact is what it is in terms of its relations to the whole, and the wise man therefore is he who has a sense of the infinite conditions of any fact, of the infinite issues of any action. "The reality of things is what they mean; what they mean is determined by their place in the order of the world; what determines their place in the order of the world is the supreme good, the

<sup>1</sup>Rep. VI, 505E.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. VI, 506A; cf. *Laws* XII, 966A-B.

<sup>3</sup>For the difficulties involved in this conception, see Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 280 ff.

<sup>4</sup>97B-99C.

<sup>5</sup>64B-65A.

<sup>6</sup>Tim., 27D ff.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 509B.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 92B.

<sup>9</sup>Rep. VI, 508D; cf. *Phileb.*, 61A.



principle of that order."<sup>1</sup> The man who is unaware of the good lives a shadow existence in a shadowy world. This is the truth back of Plato's strong language. "The dialectician attains a conception of the good. Whoever cannot rationally distinguish the Idea of the Good by abstracting it from all other things, falls short of it; so long as he cannot successfully refute all objections, and be eager to do so on the basis of truth rather than of opinion, proceeding always with unfailing logic, such a one cannot be said to know either the absolute good itself or any other good. If one ever establishes any contact, it is with some image by means of opinion, not by knowledge; his present life is concerned with the wares of dreams and sleep, and before he is fairly awakened, he slips off into the unseen world and enters his final sleep."<sup>2</sup>

Now it is just this pursuit of the good, the philosopher's passionate 'love of truth' which incites him to welcome every fragment of knowledge which "reveals in any way the eternal being of things," and which discloses the relation of the individual to the world, that Plato designates the condition of the life of becoming like God (*ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ*). The dominant feature about the philosophic impulse is that it prompts the soul to go beyond itself and unite itself with the eternally real Ideas, its own kindred. It is essentially the attitude of objectivity, of appropriation of the real by conforming to it. When the soul makes its highest reach in the effort to apprehend the good it employs the intelligence only, leaving the senses behind.<sup>3</sup> With this notion as a background, Adam makes the following observation. "The *φιλοσοφία*, or love of knowledge, on which Plato so constantly insists, is of necessity and from the first a religious aspiration, because of the way in which he regards not only the organ, but also the object of knowledge. The realm of sensibles—the twilight land which lies between the darkness of Not-Being and the light of Being—can never be known; of the seen and the temporal there is no knowledge, but only, at best, 'opinion'; that which alone we can know, is the unseen, the eternal, the divine; in the last resort, as we shall afterwards see, the Idea of Good or God. In this way the lover of knowledge in Plato inevitably becomes a seeker after God."<sup>4</sup> It seemed to Plato that only in this discriminating and yet unbiased love of truth could be found a basis for a disinterested morality.<sup>5</sup> In his mind this philosophic or celestial love stands in contrast

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Rep.* VII, 534B-C.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* VII, 532A-B.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 397.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 387.

with earthly Eros. "The love which is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common and is without discrimination; this is the kind which inferior men embrace. First of all, such persons love women and youth equally well; then, they are attached to the material rather than the spiritual. The most absurd things are the object of this love; it looks only to the accomplishment of an end, disregarding the means whether they be foul or fair. The result is that its devotees do good and evil quite indiscriminately."<sup>1</sup>

On the contrary, philosophical love is particularly critical about its beloved; the true lover must know the truth of things. That is to say, the good may be regarded negatively. The Idea alone is real; matter is non-being which hinders the pure manifestation of the Idea. The soul is an incorporeal spirit destined for the intuition of the Idea. The principle of self-denial, then, stands alongside the harmonious introduction of the Idea into the world of sense as a fundamental part of the Platonic system of ethics.<sup>2</sup> There is no need to try to minimize this negative aspect by referring to it as an occasional note. Statements to the contrary are too unmistakeable. Concentration upon truth inevitably means that some of the channels of desire will run dry.<sup>3</sup> The lover of truth will be absorbed in the pleasures of the soul and will scarcely take note of bodily pleasures at all.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, covetousness will have no place in his nature, for temperance abides within. There can be no secret corner of illiberality or meanness, than which nothing can be more antagonistic to the soul which longs after the Being of things, human and divine.<sup>5</sup> Cowardice, fear, greed, and passion, are banished from his nature, and nothing can induce him to be unjust or difficult to deal with in business.<sup>6</sup> He cannot be rude or unsociable.<sup>7</sup> His mind is naturally well-proportioned and gracious toward the Being of everything; it turns spontaneously and readily adjusts itself, is *εὐαγωγός* to the truth of things.<sup>8</sup> This is a more tempered statement of that austere attitude toward the body which we met in the *Phaedo*. There the body is the grave of the spiritual life, and the deliverance of the soul from it is considered the most necessary and beneficial of all things, the philosopher's special aim.<sup>9</sup> Philosophy is the liberation

<sup>1</sup> *Sympos.*, 181B.

<sup>2</sup> Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 437 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Rep.* VI, 485D.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* VI, 485E.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* VI, 486A.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* VI, 486B.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* VI, 486B.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* VI, 486D.

<sup>9</sup> 64E ff., 82E ff.



of the soul, gifted with divine intelligence, from the leaden weights which the pleasures of sense attach to it.<sup>1</sup>

Those who have once had a glimpse of the good do not wish to return to the twilight of everyday life. Naturally, they want to live in the fruition of the heavenly vision. "There is no leisure for one who has his mind upon true being to attend to human affairs and for contending with men only to be filled with vice and envy; his vision is focussed upon an ordered world eternally the same where the strife of injustice is unknown. In that world all is in harmony with reason, and imitating that order man becomes most like it. Surely there is no alternative except to imitate what one holds in reverent converse."<sup>2</sup> The contrast of the two orders of life is all too apparent. For when the liberated soul "recalls his old home in the cave, and the wisdom of that place and of his fellow-prisoners, do you not think he will be delighted with the change and will pity them?"<sup>3</sup> And if the inhabitants of the den were accustomed to confer honors upon those who are quickest to observe the passing shadows and the order of their succession, he would not care for such honors and glories, nor envy the possessors of them. Rather does he prefer to endure any slander than to live in that world of illusion. If he were compelled to return again to his old haunts in the den of sensibility, before his eyes became adjusted, he would make a ridiculous figure. His companions would taunt him and say: "he ascended on high, only to return without his eyes." But there is nothing surprising at the awkwardness of the philosopher who passes from the clear light of the Idea-world to the evil and shadow world of man. Here he is compelled to fight in the courts of law and contend about the images and reflections of justice with those who have never seen justice itself.<sup>4</sup> There is an irreconcilable difference in the two points of view. The majority of mankind admire the wit of the Thracian maid who twitted Thales and said that he fell into a well as he was gazing at the stars. The philosopher meets with all sorts of disasters because of inexperience. "His awkwardness is dreadful, conveying the impression of stupidity. He makes no personal retort to those who rail at him, because not knowing scandal of any one he makes no capital of it. Consequently he is ridiculed for helplessness. He is adjudged an idiot, because in the unpretentious candor of his own mind he is thoroughly amused when he hears praise and glorification heaped upon fellow-citizens. Whenever a

<sup>1</sup>Rep. VII, 518E-519B.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. VI, 500B-C; cf. VII, 519C.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. VII, 516C.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. VII, 516C-517E.

tyrant or king is eulogized, he fancies that he hears the praises of some stock-ranger, perhaps a swine-herd, a shepherd, or a cowherd, who is congratulated on the quantity of milk he obtains; and the philosopher remarks that the more disagreeable and more treacherous creature of the two is he whom they beguile and out of whom they squeeze their livelihood. A great man of this sort, he admits, is perforce as crude and uneducated as any shepherd because he is without leisure, and he is surrounded by a wall, which is his mountain-pen. When he hears of the proprietor of an immense estate, ten thousand acres or more, our philosopher deems this a trifle, since he is wont to survey the whole earth. He remarks that that praise is altogether feeble and betrays cramped vision in those who sing of family, how seven generations of wealthy ancestors makes some one a gentleman; being without education, their minds are not strong enough to see the whole steadily, or to consider that every man has had myriads of ancestors, and among that host have been rich and poor, kings and slaves, barbarians and Greeks, progenitors innumerable for everybody . . . He laughs at their inability to count and thereby deliver themselves from senseless vanity. Indeed, in all these relationships the philosopher is ridiculed by the multitude, partly, it seems, because he despises them, and again because he is unfamiliar with what lies at his feet and is confused."<sup>1</sup>

The result is that the philosopher is isolated from his community. The ship of state is manned by ignorant and dissolute seamen who have not only neglected to learn the principles of navigation, but they deny that they can be learned. The owner and master of the ship is deficient both in respect of ability and of knowledge, and is easily drugged into indifference. A rogue by persuasion and fraud obtains the seat of the pilot, while the only able seaman is set aside as a star-gazer and theorist. But why is he useless? Surely, the order of nature is not for the physician to beseech the patient or the pilot to beg the sailors to give him authority.<sup>2</sup> In the eyes of the world the philosopher is helpless and alone. "He is like one who, in a driving storm of dust and sleet, retires under the shelter of a wall; he sees that other men are filled with lawlessness, and is content if only he may preserve himself free from the taint of injustice and unholy deeds; he will live apart and go hence in peace, propitiously, and with bright hopes."<sup>3</sup> Under the present

<sup>1</sup>Theaet., 174C-175B.

<sup>2</sup>Rep. VI, 488C-489C.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. VI, 496D-E; cf. Gorg., 521 D.



régime, if virtue ever comes to a state, it must be by the power of God alone.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, the philosopher is useless. But should it not be repeated in his defense that the lover of knowledge is naturally striving after Being? He cannot rest in the multiplicity of individual and surface appearances. The goal of his life is to embrace reality, and to become like it.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, he cannot pay the price which society demands as the condition of sharing its life. The public is the great sophist, and demands of its teachers that they become servile men-pleasers. "I would liken its teachers to a man who tends a big and strong beast, and by studying its tempers and passions learns how to approach and handle him, also at what times and just why he becomes very dangerous or docile, what each of his habitual cries signifies, and again the kind of noises, when another utters them, by which he is calmed or enraged. Suppose further that having mastered these details by continual association with the beast, he calls this information wisdom, and after systematizing it, he proceeds to teach, and without any real knowledge of these principles and passions he designates the honorable and dishonorable, good and evil, just and unjust—all in accordance with the whims of the great beast. That which pleases the beast he calls good, and whatever vexes him is evil; he can give no other account of them except that the just and the noble are necessary, but the nature of the necessary and the good, how great their real difference is, is invisible to him, and he is unable to point it out to anyone else. By Zeus, do you not agree that such a man would be a rare educator?"<sup>3</sup> It would be difficult to cite a more stinging critique of the pleasure-pain criterion of morals.

In the face of such a world what shall the lover of truth do? He knows that in knowledge the soul goes out into communion with its own higher self, with the divine soul which pervades the world. The doctrine of recollection has taught us that the divine Ideas awaken in man the impulse to rise up into communion with them.<sup>4</sup> The soul becomes like the divine objects which it pursues, so far as mortals may participate in God.<sup>5</sup> "The person who is occupied with the cravings of appetite and ambition and eagerly labors to satisfy them, makes all his thoughts mortal, and, as far as possible, becomes mortal himself in every respect, because he

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 492E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 490A-B.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 253A; *Rep.* VI, 500C; *Laws* IV, 716C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 493A-C.

<sup>5</sup>*Phaedr.*, 249C-E.

has cherished the mortal part. But the man who has been zealous in the love of learning and of true wisdom, and has exercised himself especially in these matters, thinks what is immortal and divine; if he reaches the truth, methinks, he must be altogether immortal, that is, so far as human nature can attain immortality; and because he is always cherishing the divine, and has the divinity within him in perfect order, he will be perfectly happy."<sup>1</sup>

It is a notable feature of this teaching that this divine perfection, assimilation to which is the acme of human happiness, comes by adjustment to the universal order. In keeping with this emphasis Plato says that the wise man will rule in the city within him, although not in the land of his birth, unless divine fortune attend him.<sup>2</sup> "But, I said, in heaven there is doubtless a pattern of that city for the one who wishes to see it, and seeing it he may take up his abode there. No matter whether it is or shall be; the wise man would conform to that city alone, and to no other."<sup>3</sup> This is the conception of the ideal human life which in the *Theaetetus* is described as an imitation of God. "Evil cannot perish; for there must always be something opposed to the good; nor can evil take up its abode among the gods, but it must haunt mortal nature and this world of ours. Wherefore, we ought to escape hence and fly to heaven as quickly as possible. But flight means to become like God as far as possible; and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise. For it is not easy to persuade mankind that the motive for avoiding vice and pursuing virtue is not, as men generally say, for the reputation of being good and not being bad, which, in my judgment, is only repetition of old wives' fables. The truth is that God is never in any way unrighteous; he is perfect righteousness, and he among us who is perfectly just is most like him . . . There are two patterns in the world, the godlike ideal of perfect happiness, and the godless ideal of utter wretchedness; but men do not see that this is true, or that by the extreme of vanity and folly they become through their unjust deeds, without knowing it, like the one and unlike the other. The penalty is that they lead a life answering to the pattern which they resemble. And if we tell them that unless they give up their cleverness, the place of innocence will not receive them after death, and in this world they must ever walk in the likeness of their character, evil with evil, clever and experienced men that they are, they will regard these words as the counsel of simpletons."<sup>4</sup> Plato is con-

<sup>1</sup>*Tim.*, 90B-C.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* IX, 592A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 592B; *cf.*, IV, 452E.

<sup>4</sup>176A-177A.



vinced that *ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ* is not an idle adventure. Happiness and well-being lie in that direction, the sanity and meaning of the world is pledged to this truth. Happiness is rooted in the nature of things, or happiness is not to be found. The gods know the just and the unjust as they really are. "Therefore, so much must be admitted in favor of the just man: whether he meets with poverty, or sickness, or any other apparent misfortune, for him these things will finally work some good, in life and in death. For the man who, by the practice of virtue, desires to become just and like unto God, as far as mortal may, will not be forgotten by the gods."<sup>1</sup>

While the negative and world-denying phase of morality is prominent in the process of becoming like God, one can hardly fail to see that its whole significance cannot be read in negative terms. The negative and the positive elements blend into one. Reason is ever transcending what is external and less significant in order to comprehend what is more objective and more meaningful. And it is this positive appropriation of the Idea, with which reason is akin, that constitutes Plato's distinctive advance in the conception of the organizing principle of experience. Can the lover of wisdom find the object of his quest within the relationships of ordinary society? Plato answers emphatically: Everything in its own way reveals the Idea of the Good.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the philosopher cannot overlook things great or small, more or less honorable.<sup>3</sup> "The world as it is to sense is the image and product of the good, and the world as it is to intelligence is also the image and the product of the good; so, we might say, the whole world, whether as it is to sense or as it is to intelligence, whether in its more superficial or in its more profound aspect, reflects the good."<sup>4</sup> The twofold purpose of education is to lead men up to the Idea of the Good, and then down again among the prisoners of the den to share in their labors and honors.<sup>5</sup> There is nothing unjust in this because the purpose of the legislators is to bring happiness to the whole state, and not to a particular class.<sup>6</sup> The duty of the philosophers is to the state, and the law must say to them: "Wherefore each one of you in turn must descend into the common abode of men, and become accustomed to seeing in the dark. For when you acquire the habit, you will see ten thousand times better

<sup>1</sup>Rep. IX, 613A.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. VII, 508E ff.; *Phaedr.*, 28A ff., 64C ff.; *Tim.*, 47B, C, 92B; cf. Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup>Rep. VI, 485B.

<sup>4</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 236.

<sup>5</sup>Rep. VII, 519D.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. VII, 519E.

than the inhabitants of the den, and you will know the nature of each image and what it represents, because you have beheld the truth of the beautiful, the just, and the good. And thus our state, and yours, will become a reality, and will not be a dream only, as is the case with the administration of many states of the present time, in which men fight with one another about shadows and are distracted in the struggle for power, as if it were in itself a great good."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, philosophers must assume the obligation of ruling in the state as the only hope of curing the ills which now afflict human society. "Except philosophers become kings, or kings and princes achieve the knowledge and power of philosophy; and except political power and wisdom unite in the same individual, while the many natures who at present pursue either one apart from the other are forced to stand aside, there can be no cessation of evils for states—indeed, in my opinion, no deliverance for the human race. Until that time, this state of ours cannot become a fact and see the light of day."<sup>2</sup> This is indeed a hard saying. But in the thought of Plato the condition of well-being or happiness is that the reason which is in the world and in the individual shall have supreme authority in the lives of men. Man must become like God, here and now. As he tells us in the *Laws*,<sup>3</sup> God holds in his hands the order of the universe, and He travels according to his nature in a straight line. "Justice is his unfailing companion and the avenger of all who fall short of divine law. To justice, the man who would be happy must hold fast, and follow after her in humility and in order; but whoever is lifted up with pride, or is puffed up by wealth, or honor, or beauty, along with a youthful lack of judgment, whose soul is inflamed with insolence, so that he seeks neither ruler nor guide, but deems himself qualified to guide others, this man is bereft of God. Thus forsaken of God, he accumulates his likely friends and skips about to spread general confusion. He is a somebody in the eyes of the many; but quickly he reaps the reward which justice must approve, and harvests utter destruction for himself, his family, and his city."

Two things should be clear. First, the Good is the universal principle of reality; secondly, virtue or goodness is acquired by becoming like God or the Good, by the rule of reason in the individual and social life. In the latter process, the denial of the immediate values of sense is blended with the individual's discovery

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. VII, 520C.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. V, 473D-E.

<sup>3</sup>IV, 716A-B.



and assimilation of the values of reason. The meaning of this two-fold process will become clearer and more definite, if we seek Plato's reasons for rejecting two rival points of view in ethics. The one with which we are most familiar is the doctrine that virtue is the excess of pleasure over pain. When Plato first takes up the discussion of pleasure as a criterion of morals, he makes no distinctions in kind. All pleasures are bodily pleasures. At first glance, this may appear a piece of sheer carelessness. The reason, however, is found elsewhere. In the first place, this is the meaning of pleasure presupposed in the current sophistic ethics. Then, too, as we learned from the *Gorgias*, where the good is first set in radical opposition to the pleasant, in Plato's system of thought feeling is contrasted with reason, and feeling *per se* does not participate in the universal principle of reality.<sup>1</sup> When Plato refers to the pleasure criterion of morals in the *Republic*<sup>2</sup> he remarks that its exponents are led into the perplexity of admitting that there are bad as well as good pleasures; in other words, they agree that "good and bad are the same thing." The general objection that pleasure and pain can furnish no objective criterion of moral values, because they can make no salient distinctions between values, is elaborated under three main heads. Pleasures are transient, relative, and unreal.

Feelings are, to begin with, momentary; they belong to the world of becoming.<sup>3</sup> They tend to concentrate the whole of life upon a series of particular experiences; the mental life, in large part, becomes a series of satisfactions of fleeting bodily sensations. Each pleasure and pain is a nail which rivets the soul to the body, and so deceives the soul into believing that what perception momentarily affirms to be true, is true. This deception is the greatest of evils.<sup>4</sup> Anyone who proposes feelings as the standard of the morally good life disregards the higher and more permanent interests of the soul.<sup>5</sup> The life in which moral values are determined by the satisfaction of senuous appetites is the facsimile of a leaky vessel; pleasure depends upon the superabundance of inflow. As a series of momentary indulgences, life becomes cormorant-like and is no longer human.<sup>6</sup> The more violent pleasures which reach the soul through the body are in constant motion.<sup>7</sup> The pleasure

<sup>1</sup>507E ff; cf. *Polit.*, 283C ff; *Phileb.*, 25E ff.

<sup>2</sup>VI, 505C.

<sup>3</sup>*Rep.* IX, 583E; *Tim.*, 64C-D.

<sup>4</sup>*Phaedo*, 83C-E.

<sup>5</sup>*Gorg.*, 501A ff; *Phaedo*, 79C ff; *Phileb.*, 63D-E.

<sup>6</sup>*Gorg.*, 494B; *Phileb.*, 21C.

<sup>7</sup>*Rep.* IX, 584C.

seeker is committed to the pursuit of transient unreality. "Those who lack wisdom and virtue, and continually spend their time at feasting and sensuality, go down and back again toward the mean; in this region they range all their lives, but in their ascent they never visualize or reach the true upper world; they are not satisfied with Being, nor do they taste of pure and abiding pleasure. Like cattle ever looking downward and stooping their heads to the ground, that is, to the table, they feed and fatten and breed; by reason of their delight in these things they kick and butt one another with hoofs and with horns of iron; and their insatiable lust leads them to kill one another, because they use unsubstantial materials to fill an incontinent part of their being."<sup>1</sup> In this way the body becomes the grave of the soul. In the deeper sense, therefore, the practice of death of which Plato speaks ceases to be a *consuetudo moriendi*, and is rather a *consuetudo vivendi*, the practice of the spiritual, or, as Plato would say, of the noetic life, the life of the divine part of our nature.<sup>2</sup>

In the second place, pleasures are relative. In this connection Plato calls attention to the fact that all feelings are psychologically real, whether false or true.<sup>3</sup> Therefore certain natural philosophers have an instinctive dislike for pleasure and speak of its seductive power as a kind of witchcraft.<sup>4</sup> These same men claim that pleasure is only the absence of pain.<sup>5</sup> That is, the values of such feelings rest, in part, upon the illusion of the senses. The one feeling plays against the other, and the value of both depends upon borrowed capital. For this reason they are rightly called slavish.<sup>6</sup> "Now, pleasures and pains have an illusory character by reason of their nearness or remoteness, and in comparison one with the other; pleasures appear greater and more intense alongside of grief, pains also vary when side by side with opposite pleasures."<sup>7</sup> The relativity of feeling comes out more clearly in the fact that the most intense pleasures are associated with some vicious or diseased state of body or soul.<sup>8</sup> With growth in intensity feelings rob the mind of any share in reason.<sup>9</sup> Virtue

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 586A-B.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Adam, *Op. cit.*, p. 385; Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup>*Phileb.*, 37A, B, 40D, E, 42C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 44C.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 45C; cf., 41C; *Rep.* IX, 584C.

<sup>6</sup>*Phaedr.*, 258E; cf. Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 312.

<sup>7</sup>*Phileb.*, 42B; cf. *Phaedo*, 83B ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 45C, E; *Tim.*, 86B; *Rep.* VII, 519A, 533 D; X, 611C.

<sup>9</sup>*Tim.*, 86C, D, 90B; *Phaedo*, 66C, 81B, 83C; *Laws* IX, 870A, C.



based upon feeling is unstable, and is apt to be bartered away at the promise of a larger feeling. Such virtue Plato repudiates in vehement language. What cares the philosopher for the paltry satisfactions of bodily desires? Will he stoop to the level of the mass of men and be virtuous for the sake of vice? Can he accede to the idea that goodness comes in the barter of pleasure for pleasure? Surely great eagerness to trade pleasures indicates a lack of unreality and relative worthlessness in what one possesses.<sup>1</sup> The philosopher is looking for the principles of the moral life, and he cannot build on shifting sands. He sees that such value as pleasures possess is borrowed from reason. "My blessed Simmias, the exchange of one pleasure for another, of one pain for another, of one fear for another, of the greater for the less, like coins, is no true exchange in respect of virtue. On the contrary, is not the sole true coin, wisdom, for which one must exchange all things else, and for this and in conjunction with this all things are really bought and sold? Courage and temperance and justice, and in a word all true virtue is united with wisdom, regardless of whether pleasures and fears and all such things are added or taken away. Separated from wisdom and fluctuating from one to the other, such shifting virtue is only a shadow and in reality a slave's virtue, and there is no health nor truth in her, but that which is really true is a purification of such conditions, and temperance, justice, courage, and prudence herself, are in a certain sense, their purification."<sup>2</sup>

In the third place, to go to the root of the matter, pleasures are transient, and relative, and unreal, because they belong to the category of the indeterminate (*τὸ ἀπειρον*).<sup>3</sup> This class of phenomena includes the indefinite, the incomplete, the immeasurable, that which neither has nor ever will have in itself a beginning, a middle, or an end of its own.<sup>4</sup> When we recall that the principle of the limit signifies for Plato the presence of reason, and that without it nothing is intelligible, the force of the charge against the feelings becomes apparent. It means that in themselves feelings are chaotic and devoid of the elements of a rational organization and therefore of reality. The idea of measure or proportion has in Plato's thought something of the power and meaning which invests the modern idea of law.<sup>5</sup> Law signifies the presence of the good, and it is the source of justice and temperance.<sup>6</sup> Plato's

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 68D-69A.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 69A-C.

<sup>3</sup>*Phileb.*, 27E.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 24B, C, 25A, 31A.

<sup>5</sup>Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 312.

<sup>6</sup>*Gorg.*, 504D.

contention is that when law or measure enters the life of feeling, it is introduced *ab extra* by reason.<sup>1</sup> The *Republic*<sup>2</sup> enforces this point in the detailed story of the decline of the soul. The process of disintegration begins at the top, in the refusal to enthrone reason as the chief authority, and it culminates in the chaotic and wretched condition of the tyrant. Furthermore, the presence of the good or reason lies at the basis of all important distinctions in the quality of pleasures.<sup>3</sup> The fact that reason is capable of systematizing the feelings and of maintaining their orderliness, manifests itself in the increased confidence in reason which Plato expressed in the later Dialogues. His increased confidence in the mastery of reason over feeling is shown by contrasting his extremely puritanical attitude toward the fine arts, by his demand for utter singleness of form, as expressed in the *Republic*,<sup>4</sup> and his later position that the feelings are fundamental to the life of man, deserving primary consideration in education.<sup>5</sup> "I say, then, that pleasures and pains are the first perceptions in the education of children, and in these forms virtue and vice first approach the soul. As to wisdom and settled convictions of truth, fortunate is the man to whom they come even in old age, and he is a perfect man who possesses them and all of their advantages. Now by education I mean the training of the first instinct of virtue in children. If pleasure and friendship, pain and aversion, are rightly implanted in the souls of those who are not yet capable of understanding their nature, and if, when reason is added, these feelings harmonize with it because they have been rightly trained, this habituation in a rational life is virtue in its completeness; but the particular training of the soul in respect of pleasures and pains, so that from the beginning until the end of life, he hates what he ought to hate and cherishes what he ought to cherish—this, according to my view, may be set apart and rightly called education."<sup>6</sup>

Plato stands firm on his fundamental principle that pleasure is not first among the elements of a good life. If it is absurd to argue that there is nothing good or noble in the body; it is equally so to maintain that the only good of the soul is pleasure, or that a man is vicious when in pain and virtuous when he is pleased.<sup>7</sup> Pleasure

<sup>1</sup>*Phileb.*, 25E, 32A, 40B, 61B, 64D.

<sup>2</sup>VIII, 547E ff.; IX, 573A-B, 579C-580A; cf. *Critias*, 120E-121A.

<sup>3</sup>*Phileb.*, 51C, 52C, 53B, 54A-C, 57B; *Rep.* VIII, 558D-E, 561A.

<sup>4</sup>II, 380D; III, 387A ff., 398A ff.; X, 605C-608B; cf. *Phaedo*, 79C ff.; *Phileb.*, 43E; Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 93 ff.; Gomperz, *Op. cit.*, III, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup>*Tim.*, 70E; *Laws* I, 636D, 644D; V, 733C; XII, 961D.

<sup>6</sup>*Laws* II, 653A-C.

<sup>7</sup>*Phileb.*, 55B.



is last in the elements of the good, but never first: "No, not if all the oxen and horses, in a word, the whole animal kingdom, by their pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure say so; although the many believing in them, as diviners trust birds, deem pleasures to be the sum of a good life, and regard the lusts of animals as better witnesses than the inspired judgments of divine philosophy."<sup>1</sup> This passage from the close of the *Philebus* may well be set alongside his judgments in the same work that a life of apathy is not worth while.<sup>2</sup> Only the pure pleasures are admitted, and they are among the least elements of a virtuous life; yet, the virtuous man is happy.

We have seen that the *Gorgias* also makes the important distinction between pleasure and happiness, and it is one of the most fundamental distinctions in Plato's ethics.<sup>3</sup> The great king to whom every gratification of pleasure is open, is not happy unless he is just.<sup>4</sup> Injustice, though pleasant, must be removed as a cancer of the soul.<sup>5</sup> The citizens of the ideal republic are asked to renounce all the privileges and luxuries of property, and most of what is commonly thought necessary to the enjoyment of life, in the face of which Socrates is inclined to think that they will be the happiest of men.<sup>6</sup> Besides, the state is founded with a view to the welfare of the whole, and not to a disproportionate happiness of one class. It would be absurd to paint the eyes of a portrait purple, because purple is the most beautiful of colors, and the eye the most beautiful part of the face. Just so in the state we must see that each part performs its functions within the whole organism. That is the sole test of virtue and happiness.<sup>7</sup> "The point of this passage is not to deny the right of classes and individuals to happiness, nor to assert the existence of some abstract happiness of the whole which is not that of the parts. The point is that happiness is not a determinate thing, so much money, so much enjoyment, which we can attach at pleasure to this person or that. Happiness is in what a man is and does, and this must be determined by his position, as the beauty of a color is determined by its relation to other colors."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Phileb.*, 67B.

<sup>2</sup>21D, 60E, 63E.

<sup>3</sup>*Cf. More, Op. cit.*, p. 86 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Gorg.*, 471 D; *cf. Critias*, 121B.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 480A-B; *cf. Rep.* IX, 579C-580C.

<sup>6</sup>*Rep.* IV, 419A-420B.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 420B-421C; *cf.* V, 465D-466C.

<sup>8</sup>Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 360.

The foregoing comment of Nettleship accords with an unmistakable emphasis in Plato's thinking, that the hedonist tries to abstract pleasure from its context and thereby falsifies the whole of experience. This is a recurrence of the idea that feeling left to itself lacks the principle of measure, and tries to exclude wisdom and understanding. The identification of the good with the pleasant, Plato thinks, is the futile attempt to describe the whole nature of man as a 'feeling' being, to the exclusion of the universalizing power of reason. In opposition to this viewpoint, he maintains that it is only through the interference and rule of reason that the feeling side of experience is kept from self-defeat. The following passage is quite sufficient on this point. "Then, I said, may we not confidently assert that the desires of both the appetitive and the ambitious principle will obtain the truest pleasures and in the highest degree which is possible for them, if they pursue their pleasures under the guidance and in the company of reason, and win the pleasures which wisdom points out for them; and the reason is that they follow truth and obtain the pleasures natural to them, if indeed that is best for each one which is also most natural?"

"Yes, certainly; the best is the most natural.

"And when the whole soul follows the philosophical principle, and there is no internal dissension, the several parts are just, and each one does its own business, and they enjoy severally the best and truest pleasures possible for them?"

"Exactly.

"But whenever either of the two other principles gains control, it not only fails in attaining its own pleasure, but it compels the others to pursue a false pleasure, one which is unnatural.

"Very true.

"Therefore, the greater the interval which separates them from philosophy and reason, the more strange and illusory will be the pleasure."<sup>1</sup>

It is reason alone, then, which gives permanence and social character to moral experience. Consequently, Plato places wisdom and justice among the highest virtues.<sup>2</sup> Where reason rules, life is assimilated to God or the Good and attains perfect happiness. In the good life, pleasures and pains are incidentals;<sup>3</sup> the aim of a rational life is the due proportion and harmony of all its parts. Happiness lies in the satisfaction of an ideally perma-

<sup>1</sup>*Rep.* IX, 586D-587A.

<sup>2</sup>*Phaedr.*, 246D-E; *Rep.* V, 452E; VI, 485C, 486B; VII, 535E; IX, 591D; *Phileb.*, 63B ff.; *Laws* IV, 716A; XI, 937E.

<sup>3</sup>*Phileb.*, 22B, 55A; *Laws* VII, 792D.



nent self which cannot be identified with a 'sum of pleasures.'<sup>1</sup> In the opening section of the *Republic* Plato agrees to strip justice of all advantages which men commonly regard as the source of pleasures, in order to determine the relative happiness of the just and the unjust life. His final decision is that, from every point of view, the exponent of justice speaks the truth, and that the claims of injustice are false.<sup>2</sup> For, he asks: "How can it be profitable to accept gold unjustly, on condition that when taking the coin a man should enslave the best part of himself to the worst part? Or, if in receiving the money he bound over to slavery a son or a daughter, and that too, into the hands of fierce and wicked men, would it not be unprofitable, however enormous the price of exchange? And if a man, without remorse, enslaves the divinest principles within himself to that which is most godless and detestable, is he not a wretch? Eriphyle exchanged a necklace for her husband's life, but this man accepts a bribe in order to compass a worse ruin."<sup>3</sup> In a certain sense, happiness and pleasure are mutually exclusive; in the good life, reason qualifies and transmutes all the feelings of sense. We are to teach our young men that "to have a firm grip on the victory over pleasures is happiness, but to be conquered by them is the very opposite."<sup>4</sup> F. H. Bradley has an illuminating remark on the meaning of happiness which is truly Platonic. "What is always with us is the feeling of pleasure in the self which is affirmed permanently and really; what we have done and are, exists apart from our feeling it, and so is objective; and in that habitual reality we have perpetual satisfaction."<sup>5</sup>

We have already noted that in the *Protagoras* and the *Meno*, Plato doubts the validity of a second current theory of virtue, viz., the identification of virtue with intellectual wisdom, which was favored by Socrates, but more definitely held by the Cynic-Megarian School.<sup>6</sup> When Plato, in the *Republic*,<sup>7</sup> recurs to the theory that knowledge is the good, he dismisses it in an abrupt way. "The fact is, my good sir, that those who hold this position cannot define knowledge, but are finally compelled to say: 'knowledge of the good.'"

"How ridiculous!

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Green, *Prolegomena*, Sections, 228, 232, 234, 238-244.

<sup>2</sup>IX, 589C.

<sup>3</sup>Rep. IX, 589D-E.

<sup>4</sup>Laws VIII. 840C; cf. Rep. I, 328D; VI, 485D-E; IX, 572E ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ethical Studies, p. 259.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Zeller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 186, 441.

<sup>7</sup>VI, 503B-C.

"Of course, I replied, if they reproach us because we know not the good, and again say that we do; for they define the good as knowledge of the good, implying that we understand their meaning when they use the term 'good'." This is the position of the finer sort of wits (*κομψότεροι*). These are the people, doubtless, to whom Plato later refers as the over-educated, and whom he rejects as possible rulers of the state. They act "only under compulsion, fancying that they dwell apart in the isles of the blest."<sup>1</sup> While Plato is not less devoted to the ideal of knowledge,<sup>2</sup> he has a deep insight into its nature. It is only the superhuman knowledge which is ridiculous.<sup>3</sup> All forms of knowledge must be admitted, if life is to be human; but if we waited until our knowledge were perfect, we never should be able to act.<sup>4</sup> The virtue of the mass of men, and of all men in the earlier part of their lives, must be a product of unconscious influences under which they grow up as members of society, and of teaching which only approximates a scientific character. The virtues of habit are nevertheless adumbrations of the highest and philosophic virtue.<sup>5</sup> To a certain extent it is the living experience which is the light of men. Both pure pleasures and all forms of knowledge partake of measure, beauty, and truth, to some degree, i.e., have a principle of order.<sup>6</sup> It must not be overlooked, however, that knowledge is much more akin to the good than is pleasure;<sup>7</sup> and both "knowledge and pleasure fail in their claim to the absolute good; both lack self-sufficiency and the power of adequacy and perfection."<sup>8</sup>

Just how reason and feeling blend in the good life is a crucial consideration, and Plato approaches it with undisguised caution. "Every man knows that a mixture which deviates in the slightest degree from natural measure and symmetry is necessarily fatal both to the elements and to the combination itself; it is then not a mixture, but an unseemly aggregation which brings confusion to the possessor of it."<sup>9</sup> We shall take his words seriously, and attempt no further analysis in this direction. But fortunately, Plato has given us his general view of the interdependence of knowledge and feeling. No line can be drawn between the intellectual and the moral nature; no one can be affected by moral evil in one part of

<sup>1</sup>Rep. VII, 519C.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. VII, 517B-C.

<sup>3</sup>Phileb., 62B.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 22D, 55A, 60B, 65D, 66C, E.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 67A. Cf. Nettleship, *Remains*, p. 333.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 64D.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 62C, D.

<sup>8</sup>Rep. VI, 504D; X, 619C; *Phaedo*, 82B.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. VII, 517B-C.

<sup>3</sup>Phileb., 62B.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 22D, 55A, 60B, 65D, 66C, E.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 62C, D.

<sup>8</sup>Rep. VI, 504D; X, 619C; *Phaedo*, 82B.

<sup>9</sup>Phileb., 64B-66A.



his soul and retain intellectual insight into its nature with the other part. Or conversely, irresponsiveness to the values which are pre-supposed in the most complete development of human life is the crowning stupidity. This is illustrated in Plato's ideal of the character he calls the judge.<sup>1</sup> The man who knows is one who is above all distinguished in goodness or virtue. Plato contrasts him with the clever and suspicious pessimist who, from personal experience, claims to know about the "facts" of the moral life. But, says Plato, "whenever he approaches a company of men of virtue, who have had the experience of age, once more he becomes a fool; he is unseasonably suspicious, and blind to soundness of character, because he has no pattern of honesty in himself . . . " The conclusion is that virtue is knowledge; a virtuous man educated by much observation, will acquire knowledge of both virtue and vice; the virtuous man, and not the vicious man has wisdom. Plato's idea is that a man cannot keep his intellectual judgment apart from his personal character; when the moral feelings are awry, the integrity of the intellect is impaired. This is the newer meaning implied in the old thesis that 'knowledge is virtue.' A passage in the *Laws*,<sup>2</sup> bears out this interpretation. "When a man does not love but rather hates what he thinks is noble and good, and again, when he loves and embraces what he deems evil and unjust, this disagreement of pain and pleasure with the judgment of reason is, I believe, the extreme of ignorance; it is the greatest ignorance because it infects the larger part of the soul, and the principle of pleasure and pain in the soul corresponds to the mass or populace in the state. And so whenever the soul is opposed to knowledge, or right opinion, or reason, her natural lords, I pronounce this folly, just as when the majority in the state disobeys the rulers and laws. The individual is foolish in the same sense, when fair reasons dwell in the soul and in their impotence work only evil." The man who responds in this manner must be without authority in the state; he is to be stigmatized as ignorant, even though he is versed in calculation, and skilled in all sorts of accomplishments and feats of mental dexterity. The opposite character is to be regarded as wise, and can be entrusted with authority, even though, as the proverb goes, 'he knows neither how to read nor how to swim.' Discussing the same conception of knowledge, Bernard Bosanquet writes: "I believe that the intelligence of 'the worst man upon earth' is confused through-

<sup>1</sup>*Rep.* III, 409B-D.

<sup>2</sup>III, 689A-E.

out and shattered by pervading discrepancies and conflicts with itself, and is wholly incapable of conceiving or of portraying an orderly life in wholesome relations with man and nature."<sup>1</sup>

In the Socratic dialogues emphasis is laid upon knowledge as the condition and instrument of well-being. Knowledge is virtue, the principle which accounts for both the unity and the variety of the virtues. On the one hand, all the virtues tend to become identified with knowledge in general, and therefore form a unit. On the other hand, knowledge of the obligations toward one's fellowmen is justice; knowledge of the principle of right and wrong is wisdom; knowledge of what is to be feared and not to be feared is courage; knowledge of what is to be desired and enjoyed is temperance. Just why knowledge receives such emphasis in these dialogues is an open question. Perhaps, it expresses a wish and a hope in the presence of the sophistic demolition of accepted standards of conduct. At any rate, no satisfactory knowledge seems to be forthcoming. Plato, accordingly, tries a different method. The emphasis is shifted to the conception of virtue as a healthy constitution of the soul itself, the proper relation of its parts. Virtue is the source and organon of happiness or the possession of the highest good, and vice is its misery.<sup>2</sup> Virtue is one, for knowledge or wisdom is unthinkable apart from the other virtues, and justice must comprehend all of them; happiness is the principle of the whole and is different from pleasure. Virtue is many, owing indeed to the diversity of objects to which moral activity refers, but primarily in the diversity of mental powers or parts of the soul at work in it.<sup>3</sup> Wisdom is reason expressed in moral judgments, and its essence is good counsel; courage is reason applied to what should or should not awaken fear; temperance is reason applied to the appetitive nature, determining what should be enjoyed and avoided; justice is reason arranging and maintaining the right constitution of the soul by the integration of all its parts, in order that each shall do its own work, and not interfere with the function of the other parts. Let us now turn to each virtue in turn, and see how the sovereignty of reason per-

<sup>1</sup>*Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>*Rep.* I, 353D-354A; II, 365E ff.; VIII, 554E; IX, 576B-E; *Gorg.*, 506D ff.; *Phaedo*, 93B; *Tim.*, 87C; *Laws* X, 906C.

<sup>3</sup>*Cf.* Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 451. Here appears the basis for the position that the Platonic virtues rest upon his psychology, e.g., James Seth., *Ethical Principles* (eleventh edition), p. 214. This view fails, however, to stress the fact that the Platonic psychology is rooted in his metaphysics.



forms the double function in the soul of self-restraint and of self-fulfilment.

Plato accepts the common notion of the Greeks that goodness or virtue manifests itself in four main forms, the cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. He discusses only these four,<sup>1</sup> and only in a fragmentary manner. Further, virtues are functions of the soul, and the capacity of that functioning does not modify their nature. The virtues of the state are only the virtues of the individual in a civic capacity.<sup>2</sup> The most convenient approach to the nature of the virtues is to view them 'writ large' in the state, and the logical order is to begin with the physical needs of men. Morality enters here because, in the satisfaction of material wants, the appetitive principle of the soul is manifest.<sup>3</sup> *Σωφροσύνη* or temperance is the characteristic virtue at this level of life. It is primarily a virtue of restraint for the reason that the feeling element predominates, which, as we have seen, is essentially without the principle of measure or proportion. And so, in this connection, Plato immediately introduces an account of the state at 'fever heat'; "for in such a state we shall be more likely to see how justice and injustice originate."<sup>4</sup> "In my opinion, many will not be content with this simpler way of living. They will be adding couches and tables and other furniture; also, dainties, and perfumes, and incense, and courtesans, and cakes of every conceivable variety. The necessities which I mentioned are no longer sufficient, such as houses, and clothing, and shoes; the arts of the painter and the embroiderer must be set in operation, and gold, and ivory, and all such materials must be procured."<sup>5</sup> The development of luxury will multiply the desires of the citizens, and call into being other classes of artisans to cater to those wants. This entails the enlargement of territory and consequent wars. There will arise the need for the warrior class, courageous men whose primary work is that of defense.<sup>6</sup> Temperance joins with its companion virtue, and the passive side of courage, endurance, is the point of contact between them. Temperance has the broader application, the restraint of appetitive excess in general.<sup>7</sup>

Again, temperance is defined as "a kind of order, the control of

<sup>1</sup>*Piety* (δουλοπείρα) is the subject of the *Euthyphro*, and it is mentioned as a fifth virtue in *Prot.*, 330B. Cf. also *Gorg.*, 507B.

<sup>2</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, pp. 68, 146. <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* II, 373A.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* II, 372A, E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* II, 372E.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* II, 374A.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* III, 388D-E.

certain pleasures and desires."<sup>1</sup> This constraint upon the tendency of feeling to overstep the boundaries established by the law of the whole being is implied in the phrase *κρείττων αὐτοῦ*, self-mastery. The word temperance (*σωφροσύνη*) signifies, etymologically, healthy-mindedness, the principle that preserves the mind. Plato thinks the phrase 'master of oneself' forcibly embodies the notion of proper limitation. The contradiction, he says, is only apparent. The meaning is plain. It implies that "in the soul there is a better and an inferior principle. When the better principle has control of the worse, the man is master of himself, a term of praise; whenever, owing to evil training or association, the better self, being the smaller, is overpowered by the sheer size of the inferior self, this is a condition for censure, and the man is a slave of himself and unprincipled."<sup>2</sup> Self-mastery carries the idea of moderation, the rule of reason, assisted by the spirit, over the appetitive nature.<sup>3</sup> Applied to the state, it means the rule of the superior, the class in whom reason has matured, and the willing obedience of the subject class in whom appetite predominates, the rulers being assisted by the auxiliaries, the spirited class. Temperance is realized when the limitation and measure imposed by reason is accepted by feeling as the order of nature.<sup>4</sup> However, Plato's description of the tripartite soul, in which feeling predominates over the major part of the area, and throughout which reason must be the principle of proportion, need not convey the idea that the feeling side of experience is distorted. It is the nature of reason to observe the boundaries of the several parts as determined by their relation within the whole life. Or in less mechanical fashion, the essence of reason is measure or proportion in the Platonic sense of the law of internal organization. The good man, in the presence of a calamity like the death of a son, cannot help sorrowing; only, he will be moderate.<sup>5</sup> "The law says, as I recall, that it is best to be patient in misfortune and not to give way, as there is no knowing whether such things are good or evil, and nothing is gained by impatience; no human affair is of vast importance, and grieving hinders what is most required under the circumstances."<sup>6</sup> Temperance is reason at work transforming the motley life of feeling in terms of the well-being of the whole nature

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 430E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 431A-B.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 431E-432A; cf. *Phaedo*, 68C; *Laws* I, 671D, 673E; V, 729A; VIII, 835D-E, 841C.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* X, 603E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 431C.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* X, 604B-C.



of man. The *Laws* regard moderation as the source of myriad blessings, and the first appointment of nature.<sup>1</sup> Excess is fatal to any person or thing.<sup>2</sup> Moderation should preside over the three crucial desires of human life.<sup>3</sup> No man should be honored in the state on any basis of excellence which neglects temperance.<sup>4</sup> Temperance is the virtue which underlies all the other virtues.<sup>5</sup> The lack of this virtue is the greatest ignorance.<sup>6</sup> "The temperate man is the friend of God, for he is like Him; one who is not temperate is unlike and different from God, and is unjust."<sup>7</sup> Such passages, if taken alone, tend to merge temperance with justice, taken as the whole of virtue. But Gomperz outruns the thought of Plato when he says: "The definition which he gives of justice is in truth more accurately applicable to temperance."<sup>8</sup>

The nature and the importance of the virtue of temperance is stressed in Plato's graphic story of the decline of the soul. He makes it plain that order and stability are introduced into feeling *ab extra*. There is one source of virtue, in the exercise of which self-denial is an organic part, and that source is reason. Without reason a moral life is out of the question. The extravagances of the selfish appetitive principle, feeling in its lowest form, begin to disorganize the state just as soon as reason is dethroned from its rightful place. Presumably, in a timocracy, the spirited nature embodied in the soldier class, holds the reins of government, but that is not the case. The desires of the appetitive soul begin to flourish under cover. The chief symptom is the growth of avarice in the secret corners of the soldiers' lives.<sup>9</sup> "They are miserly because they love money and yet have no means of acquiring it openly; they steal their pleasures, and spend that which belongs to another for self-gratification; like children, they run away from the law, their father, having been nurtured not by persuasion but by force, through neglect of the spirit of philosophy and reason, and by honoring gymnastic more than music."<sup>10</sup> This condition fosters the domination of the spirit of ambition and contention.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Laws* VIII, 839A; VII, 792D.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* III, 691C. Cf. Solonic Proverb: μηδὲν ἄγαν.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 782E-783A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* III, 696B.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* III, 697B; IV, 710A, 712A; V, 729A; *Rep.* IV, 432A; *Gorg.*, 507A-C.

<sup>6</sup>*Laws* III, 691A, 689A-E.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 716D.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.*, III, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup>*Rep.* VIII, 548A.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 548B-C.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 548C.

With the timocratic man, too, reaction sets in. Although despising riches when he is young, the desire grows apace and he becomes quite fond of them. The reason is that he has a share in the avaricious nature, and is not single-minded with respect of virtue, "having lost his best guardian."<sup>1</sup> That one guardian is 'reason blended with music.' When the lawgiver is away, the principle of appetite secretly invades the realm of spirit (*θυμοειδές*), and induces excess there.<sup>2</sup>

Now the process of disorganization is accelerated.<sup>3</sup> In the oligarchial state life has degenerated to a pursuit of wealth, the increased accumulation of which divides the population into the extremes of rich and poor. Money is the prime qualification for citizenship. The ruined spendthrift degenerates into a pauper. Only a semblance of order and decency remains, maintained by the drone appetites. Lack of education in the state hastens the process of decay.<sup>4</sup> The oligarchical individual is generated from the fateful example of his timocratical father; the lover of ambition and honor ends in penury. The son marks this failure, and accordingly dethrones the spirited element in favor of the concupiscent and covetous nature. The work of appetite is no longer concealed, but boldly asserts its domination over the whole man. "Then, I suppose, having made reason and spirit sit on the ground on either side of their sovereign in slavish submission, he will permit the one to have regard for nothing but to see how smaller sums of money may be increased, and the other must be ambitious only about the acquisition of wealth and whatever conduces to this end."<sup>5</sup> It is only a certain niggardliness about the satisfaction of his appetites which preserves the appearance of unity in his life; in reality, he is a house divided against itself.<sup>6</sup> He lacks the first condition of virtue, inasmuch as the semblance of organization in his life is enforced by the calculation of crass satisfactions anticipated.<sup>7</sup> "The true virtue of a unanimous and harmonious soul will flee far from him."<sup>8</sup>

The next step toward disunity comes when all appetites assert a bald equality. This is in violation of the first principle of society that every one should do what he is especially fitted for by nature. Democracy defies this principle and assigns "equality alike to the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 549B.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 550B.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 550C ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 552E, 554B.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 533D.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 544D.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 554C.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 554E.



equal and the unequal."<sup>1</sup> It represents the fruition of the spirit of revolt against all authority. Greed for wealth in the oligarchy creates a class of beggars. This class, disfranchised on the basis of property qualification, joins a group of malcontents who hate the propertied class and everybody in general, and are eager for revolution.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the wealthy are idle in body and in mind; "they are soft specimens to hold out against pleasures, pains, and idleness."<sup>3</sup> The general debility of both rulers and subjects breeds mutual contempt. The opinion prevails: "Our men are not very considerable."<sup>4</sup> The slightest occasion is seized upon by both parties, the 'haves and the have-nots,' as the opportunity to court the favors of foreign alliances. Civil war ensues.<sup>5</sup> In any case, democracy is the triumph of the masses, diseased by envy and malice. "In my opinion, democracy arrives when the poor have conquered their opponents, some by slaughter, and others by banishment; to the remainder they assign equality in the authority of government, inasmuch as the rulers are usually elected by lot."<sup>6</sup> Capacity counts for nothing, chance and fancy for everything.<sup>7</sup> The acme of unreason is expressed in the idea that there is no need for anyone to be or to make himself especially fitted to govern.<sup>8</sup> The absence of principle glorified by the democratic state is, of course, a replica of the democratic man. Appetite in general absorbs the whole life. However, this equality in values cannot survive the essentially unmeasured nature of feeling. The unproductive and unnecessary desires gain the upper hand and become hurtful both to body and mind.<sup>9</sup> The clamor of unbridled appetite completely drowns the failing voice of reason.<sup>10</sup> Quack theories, *ψευδεῖς καὶ ἀλαζόνες*, mount up and take the place of fair pursuits and true reasoning.<sup>11</sup> These vain conceits close the door against any aid which might come from the oligarchical principle of the productive desires. They develop a brilliant cynicism which explodes the time-worn fallacies of morality so-called. "In the struggle they gain the day, and modesty, which they name silliness, is shamelessly thrust into exile; temperance, which is dubbed cowardice, is trampled into the mire and cast forth; they persuade men that moderation and orderly expenditure are boorish-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 558C.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 555D.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 556B.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 556D.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 556E.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 557A.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 557E.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 558C; *cf.*, VI, 448B ff.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 558D.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 559E-560B.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 660C.

ness and slavery, and so by the assistance of a rabble of unprofitable appetites, they drive them beyond the border."<sup>1</sup> After the heyday of passion has been spent, the democratical man welcomes all values on an equal basis; all of the moral distinctions have been obliterated. "There is no admittance into the fortress for any true word of advice. Any suggestions that some pleasures relate to noble and good desires, while others have evil affiliations, and that one ought to encourage and honor the former, but punish and enslave the latter, are rejected. To all this he demurs and says: 'All are alike and equally honorable.'"<sup>2</sup> In this life of gracious equality toward desires and values, he lives from day to day welcoming the *next* desire; neither order nor constraint invades his free existence; his life is the epitome of many characters, and its good is its variety.<sup>3</sup>

Democracy represents the first mature form of the spirit of revolt against all self-restraint, and tyranny is its consummation.<sup>4</sup> The tide of civil war is turned and calmed under the leadership of one who emerges as the champion of the people. The seal of tyranny is fixed when the protector of the people institutes a reign of terror in defense of his newly acquired authority.<sup>5</sup> He may be expelled for a time, but there remains a basis of friendship for him, and he returns a full-grown tyrant.<sup>6</sup> His enemies, being unable to expel him, conspire to assassinate him. "Then comes the famous request for a body-guard, to which all tyrants resort who have progressed thus far in such a career: 'Let not the people's friend perish.'"<sup>7</sup> "Happy man," he must plot the destruction of the better people of the state and be hated by such good citizens as remain.<sup>8</sup> Like tyrant, like people. The vision of freedom fades into the darkness of slavery. "The people fleeing the smoke of freemen's slavery stumble into the fire which is the despotism of slaves. Freedom which surpasses all order and moderation merges into the cruelest and bitterest form of slavery."<sup>9</sup> The tyrant has enslaved the best part of his nature to that which is worst. The perversion of his nature is in time completed, and there is no crime which he will not commit.<sup>10</sup> The lowest depth is reached when he who is tyrannized over by his vilest passions is placed in a position where he can ruin thousands to satisfy them

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 560D; *cf.*, VIII, 561A. <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 566A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 561B-C.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 561C-E.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 562A ff.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 565E ff.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 566B; *cf.*, VIII, 567D.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 567C-568A.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* VIII, 569C.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 573C ff.; *cf.*, IX, 571C ff.



and can feel that he is absolutely friendless at the time when he is saying: 'I am the state'. "Truly, whatever men say, the real tyrant is a thoroughgoing slave of the greatest flattery and servility; he is in turn flattered by the vilest sort of men. He is utterly incapable of satisfying his desires, he has more wants than anyone, and is truly poor, if one examines the whole soul. All his life long, he is full of fear and beset with distractions and eruptions, like the constitution of the state of which he is an analogue."<sup>1</sup> He is a slave in a world of slaves, unjust and supremely miserable.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the description of the decline of the soul Plato lavished the gifts of his imagination. Any attempt to reproduce the picture must weaken its effect. But the important thing is that it lays down the principle of temperance, the control of feeling by reason, as one of the major principles in the Platonic system of ethics. The absence of the rule of reason leads to tyranny, which is another word for intemperance, ignorance, injustice, vice, and misery.<sup>3</sup> While virtue is many, it is also one.<sup>4</sup>

Plato's idea of the virtue of courage is best approached through his declaration that the guardian class in the state must unite the two qualities of fierceness and gentleness.<sup>5</sup> Courage is Janus-like and faces in two directions. In the direction of the more elemental feelings, courage expresses aggressiveness and endurance; it is that quality which makes a man unconquerable (*ἀνίκητον*) and not to be beaten.<sup>6</sup> The soldier class is selected from those natures which show signs of a power for guarding truth against forgetfulness or the enchantments of fear, grief, or pleasure;<sup>7</sup> bravery in battle is only an instance of this wider principle.<sup>8</sup> The first consideration in the selection of the men who are to express courage in its highest form is that they may take the perfect dye of the spirit of the laws, "in order that the legal prescriptions concerning things terrible might become indelible by their nature and nurture; that the dye of the laws may withstand such potent lyes as pleasure,—more terrible than soaps in washing out this color—and grief, and fear, and desire, the mightiest of solvents. This universal saving power of true opinion about real and false dangers, under all circumstances, I affirm and main-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 579D-E.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 580A ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 589C; IV, 443D-E; *Laws* IX, 863E-864A; VII, 819A; V, 734D.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* IV, 444B; VII, 537B; *Laws* XII, 965B, D.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* II, 375C.

<sup>7</sup>*Rep.* III, 413C.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* II, 375B; *Laws* I, 649B-D.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* III, 413B.

tain is courage."<sup>1</sup> Courage is directed primarily against one's self, and only secondarily against external danger.<sup>2</sup> In order the better to prepare the assistant rulers, Plato makes the stringent proposal of depriving them of private property and family life. These two institutions seemed to him the strongholds of selfish feelings. Feeling particularizes its values and leads to isolation; whereas reason universalizes and unifies. Plato proposes to strip men as far as possible of all inducements to revolt against the life of reason, including what we understand by the will and the higher emotions.<sup>3</sup>

Courage, then, is the ally of reason in the office of defense against the encroachments of feeling, and secondly, as the executor of reason's commands, and is therefore measured in its applications. The spirited element in man, the higher emotions, relies upon reason for eyes to see the measure of truth in the phenomenal world; spirit cannot detect the secret inroads of the lower desires.<sup>4</sup> Then, too, the quality of gentleness depends upon this knowledge of what is to be admitted into the inner citadel of a man's being, and what is to be excluded.<sup>5</sup> In company with reason, spirit "will rule over that nature—in each of us the largest part of the soul and naturally most insatiable of gain—and will restrain it, lest by the fulness of bodily pleasures, as they are termed, it become great and powerful, no longer keeping within its own sphere but trying to enslave and govern its natural rulers, thus turning upside down the whole of life."<sup>6</sup> For Plato the whole of life is pervaded by law, and reason is the lawgiver.<sup>7</sup> The boldest word, then, is that the guardian must be a philosopher.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, Plato finds an easy transition from courage to the virtue of wisdom. In the *Republic*, the philosopher as king and as citizen loves wisdom; his mind is fixed upon the true Being everywhere, and therefore he knows what is good for the whole of the soul and has the qualifications for the highest goodness.<sup>9</sup> The essence of wisdom, Plato tells us, is good counsel or deliberation.<sup>10</sup> It involves a different kind of knowledge from that which makes a

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 430A-B; cf., IV, 429C, 442A; VI, 486A, B.

<sup>2</sup>Zeller, *Op. cit.*, p. 452.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* II, 376C.

<sup>3</sup>Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 169 ff.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 442A-B.

<sup>4</sup>*Rep.* VIII, 548A.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 424C; *Laws* II, 655D; III, 700A; VII, 797A ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Rep.* VI, 503B.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* V, 475C; VI, 485B, 486A-B, 500B-C; VII, 517D-E.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 428B.



good artisan.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge of the legislator must not be limited to a particular field; his perspective must include the whole of human endeavor, and he must know in terms of universal principles.<sup>2</sup> The impulse to obtain a clear grasp of the underlying principles or 'forms,' of which the manifold and changing world is an imperfect off-print, is what distinguishes the perfect guardians (*τέλειοι φύλακες*) from those statesmen who consume time tinkering with only the detailed aspects of the constitution.<sup>3</sup> The latter resemble invalids who are always doctoring and complicating their disease. Some of them are deceived by the applause of the multitude into believing that they are real statesmen. Others among these ready servants of the state are to be pitied for their ignorance of the fact that their legislation is cutting at the heads of a hydra; their enactments are blind and without definite reference to universal principles. On the contrary, the true legislator does not begin with regulations about the market-place and the violation of contracts, and the like, whether in an ill-ordered or a well-ordered state; "in the former such enactments are quite useless, in the latter there is no difficulty in discovering them, and many will naturally flow from our previous regulations." A lawmaker must have in his mind a clear pattern or principle by which he can know whether he is maintaining what is just and to which he can appeal when he wants to effect a change.<sup>4</sup> Such knowledge includes an acquaintance with details, experience (*ἐμπειρία*) in the best sense. The wise man does not slight truth, great or small; his mind is well-disposed toward the Being of everything. Particulars supplement principles; both are required in wisdom and good counsel. True knowledge of universal principles involves *a fortiori* a knowledge of particulars.<sup>5</sup> Plato was impressed with this truth; the education of the legislator provides that the fifteen years following the age of thirty-five shall be devoted exclusively to acquiring experience which supplements the study of principles.<sup>6</sup> The wise man sees each act in its infinite bearing.<sup>7</sup> The highest achievement of wisdom is the knowledge of the good;<sup>8</sup> but it comes last of all and is the achievement of age.<sup>9</sup> Wisdom is the foundation

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 428C.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 425E-427A.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 425B, 428D.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 484A-486E.

<sup>5</sup>*Phaedr.*, 265E-266A; *Phileb.*, 16D, 17A.

<sup>6</sup>*Rep.* VII, 539E.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 485B; III, 402C; cf. *Laws* XII, 969B.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* VI, 497D, 502D-504A; VII, 534C, et *passim*.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* VII, 517B-C; *Laws* IV, 715D.

of all genuine virtue.<sup>1</sup> Mature guardians, therefore, have self-determined authority; to prescribe directions for the supreme council is out of the question, for they could have no meaning.<sup>2</sup> Of course, investing the legislators with unlimited power involves a risk, but that risk is less than the refusal to do so.<sup>3</sup> Wise men only have in them the saving virtue.<sup>4</sup> Wisdom is pre-eminently a divine virtue.<sup>5</sup>

The keystone virtue in the Platonic system is justice. It serves a twofold purpose in the soul. It safeguards against the mutual interference of the various parts of the soul, and it also co-ordinates them in such a manner that each one shall realize the maximum of its natural capacity. Justice is the principle of unity in the diversity of the functions of the soul. Political justice, to resume the regular order, inheres in the original principle upon which the state is founded, *τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν*, every man doing the work for which he is especially fitted by nature.<sup>6</sup> Now, this 'finding one's station' is just the opposite of *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, meddling in the affairs of others, which is the ruin of states.<sup>7</sup> Justice brings each member of society into a harmonious relation to his class and to the whole, so that society can act as a unit. If an artisan or an assistant guardian, for example, does not perform each his complete function, he may find pleasure, but the well-being of both the individual and society is impaired.<sup>8</sup> The more important the function, the more significant justice becomes; the legislator must never be allowed to perform the work of an artisan or *vice versa*. By the principle of justice society and human nature preserve their complexity, and, while avoiding confusion, act as a unit for the highest welfare of each part and of the whole. For no human being is all appetite, or spirit, or intellect; with Plato, the question is one of the predominance of a particular element. A community might have a spirit of intelligence, hardihood, and general agreement; but unless each of the classes and every individual have in addition the power of concentration upon their duty, intelligence would not develop into wisdom or governing power, nor hardihood into disciplined courage, nor general agreement into determined

<sup>1</sup>*Phaedo*, 69A-C; *Sympos.*, 204B; *Rep.* V, 476C-D; VII, 520C.

<sup>2</sup>*Laws* XII, 968E.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* XII, 969A.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* XII, 969C.

<sup>5</sup>*Rep.* VII, 518D-E; cf. *Phaedr.*, 278D; *Theaet.*, 176B.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 433A.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 434B.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* IV, 435A-B, 420E-421A; V, 466B-C.



co-operation. "Justice, in Plato's sense, is the power of individual concentration on duty. If a soldier is just in this sense, he is of course a brave man; if a man in a subordinate position is just, he of course accepts and maintains authority, or is 'self-controlled.' Justice therefore, although it has been spoken of as one among other virtues, and although it manifests itself in many particular actions which are called in a specific sense just, and to which the names of the other virtues are not applied, is really the condition of the existence of all the virtues; each of them is a particular manifestation of the spirit of justice, which takes different forms according to a man's function in the community. In modern phrase it is equivalent to a sense of duty."<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, in the individual soul the principle of the inconvertibility of function obtains.<sup>2</sup> Justice is the force which orders and preserves the mutual relation of these functions; it means right-relatedness.<sup>3</sup> And here justice in the economic sense obtains an added significance. Real justice is not merely doing one's own business in the state, but the doing of one's own business in a certain way, viz., as the expression of a corresponding mode of action within the soul; if an outward act is just, it signifies a right condition of the soul within, that like a just state the whole soul and its several parts perform their proper function in relation to one another and also as a unit. A man is what he does. Plato always returns to his fundamental idea that morality is essentially an inward organization or condition of the soul. In a notable passage of the *Republic*,<sup>4</sup> justice is set forth as the harmony of the soul or inward self, the crown of all the virtues. "The truth is that justice is about as we have described it; it is concerned, not with outward actions (primarily), but with the inward disposition, which is the true self and concernment of man. The just man does not permit the several parts of his soul to confuse their functions or to interfere with the business of each other. He really sets in order his own inner life, and is his own governor and lawgiver, and he is at peace with himself. And when he has united the three principles within him, which are comparable with the higher, lower, and middle notes of a scale, and the intermediate intervals,—when he has bound all these together, and is no longer many, but a completely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature, he acts in a

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship, *Lectures*, p. 151. Cf. *Rep.* IV, 422E, 433B, 444B ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Rep.* IV, 440A ff.

<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament *δικαιοσύνη* is translated *righteousness*.

<sup>4</sup> *Rep.* IV, 443C-444A.

corresponding manner. Whatever he does, whether in the transaction of business, or in the treatment of his body, or in some affair of politics, or the execution of private contracts, in everything he considers and calls that action just and good which preserves and helps to perfect this harmonious disposition, and the knowledge which presides over this activity he calls wisdom, but the unjust act is one which impairs this condition at any time, and the opinion which presides over it is ignorance."

The virtues all agree in acclaiming the sovereignty of reason as the principle of self-denial and self-realization in the moral life. The nature of man being what it is, "virtue is the health, and beauty, and well-being of the soul, and vice is its disease, and ugliness, and weakness."<sup>1</sup> Is it then not a ridiculous question to ask which is better, justice or injustice? "We know that when the bodily constitution has been destroyed, life is not endurable, no, not even if you lavish upon it all kinds of food and drink, and all wealth and power. Also, when the very principle by which we live is undermined and corrupted, is life still worth living, provided only that one can do what he fancies, except to be released from evil and injustice, or to acquire justice and virtue—assuming that we have described both of them accurately?"<sup>2</sup> How shall one answer the supporter of injustice who claims that it is more profitable to feast the multitudinous monster of appetite and strengthen the lion and the lion-like qualities, while starving and weakening the divine element in man, who is consequently liable to be dragged about at the mercy of either one or both of them?<sup>3</sup> "Therefore, let the supporter of justice answer that one ought so to speak and act that the man within shall have supreme control, and like a husbandman care for the many-headed beast, fostering and taming the gentler qualities, but hindering the growth of the wild ones. Let the man make an ally of the lion-nature, and care for all the parts, systematically, so as to make them friends among themselves, and friends with him."<sup>4</sup> Life is human in the best sense only under the guidance of the divine element, reason. And so, "From every point of view (*κατὰ πάντα τρόπων*), in respects of pleasure, reputation, and advantage, the champion of justice speaks the truth, and the champion of injustice supports falsehood. The one man knows and speaks the truth, the other is ignorant

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* IV, 444E; cf. *Tim.*, 88B, 92B; *Laws* IX, 863B-D; III, 688C

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* IV, 445A-B.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* IX, 588E. Contrast, *Rep.* IX, 590A-592A.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* IX, 589A-B.



and has a lying tongue."<sup>1</sup> And now, in order that justice may have the palm of victory, let the reputation of the just man be restored: "for it has been demonstrated that it is justice which bestows the blessings accruing to one who is really just, and that justice does not deceive those who truly receive it."<sup>2</sup>

We turn again toward the beginning of this discussion and thus find its ending. When Plato had won from the epistemological dualism of Socrates the principle of the universality of mind, and from the Pythagorean tradition the notion of a non-natural and self-sufficient life of the soul in opposition to the body, he established a new standpoint which became the metaphysical basis of his psychology and ethical theory. In Platonic ethics, reason is essentially different in nature from feeling. The former, in Platonic phraseology, participates in the Idea, and is therefore measured and proportionate; the latter becomes measured and determinate only as reason introduces the principle of the 'limit' from the non-sentient side of human nature. The dualism between reason and feeling, such as it is, is both metaphysical and psychological. Accordingly, self-denial and self-fulfilment are the two cardinal principles of the moral life; the principle of self-sacrifice is at the center rather than on the circumference of moral experience. It must be clear, however, that self-denial means the denial of the claims of the sentient self to develop unguided and uncontrolled its own entelechy, to use an Aristotelian term. Self-fulfilment exalts the power of the rational self to supervise the task of integrating the total interests of man's moral life, that more and more he may find himself at home in an objectively real world. As Nettleship says: "If asceticism means the disciplined effort to attain an end which cannot be attained without giving up many things often considered desirable, the philosophic life is ascetic; but, if it means giving up for the sake of giving up, there is no asceticism in Plato."<sup>3</sup> This ideal of the moral life is portrayed in the unrivalled lines that close the *Phaedrus*:<sup>4</sup> "Beloved Pan, and whatever gods inhabit this place, grant to me beauty in the inward soul; make the outward and the inward man fast friends. May I regard the wise as wealthy, and may my mead of gold be such as none but a temperate man can carry and own."

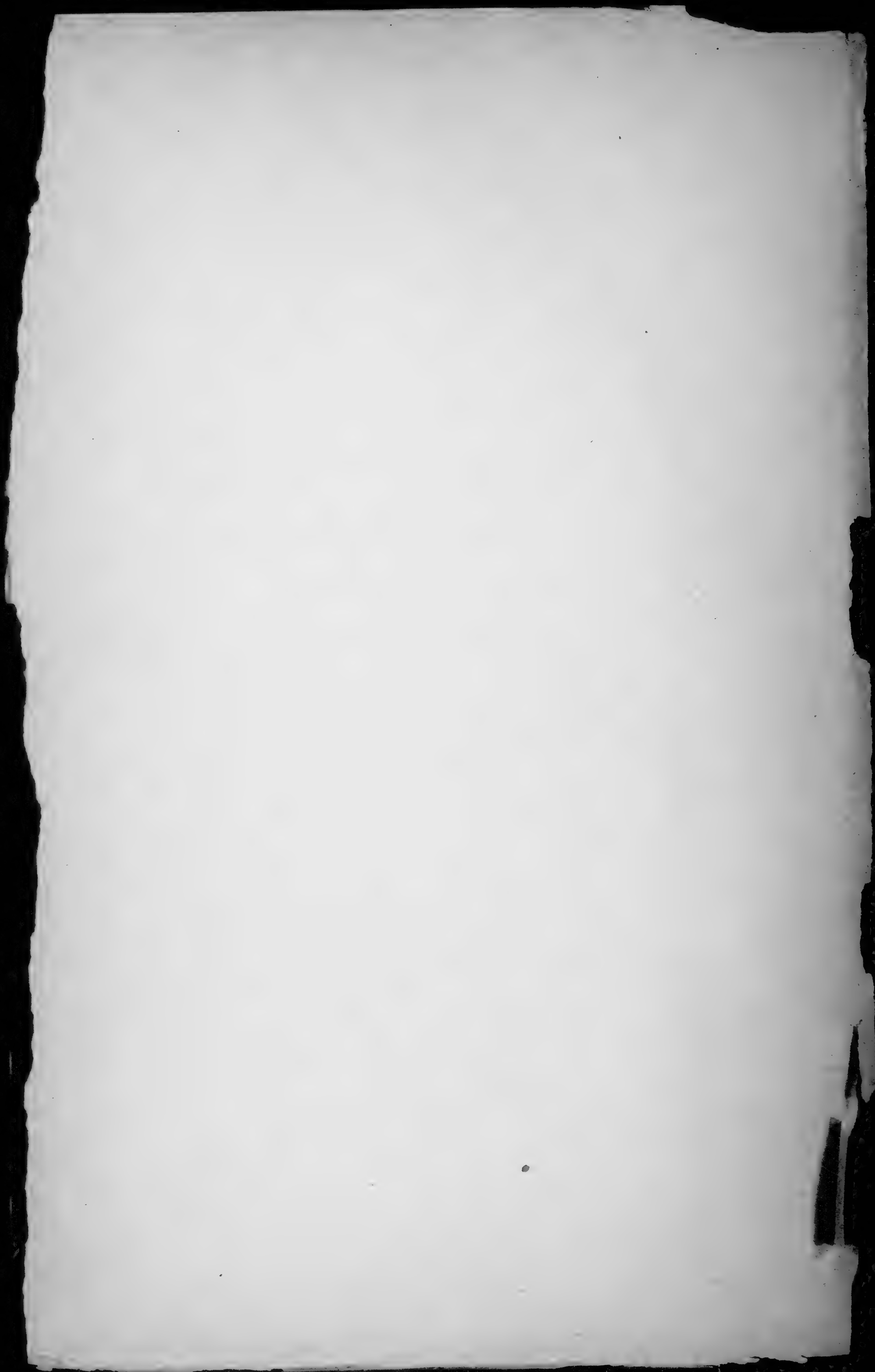
<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* IX, 589C.

<sup>3</sup>*Remains*, p. 388.

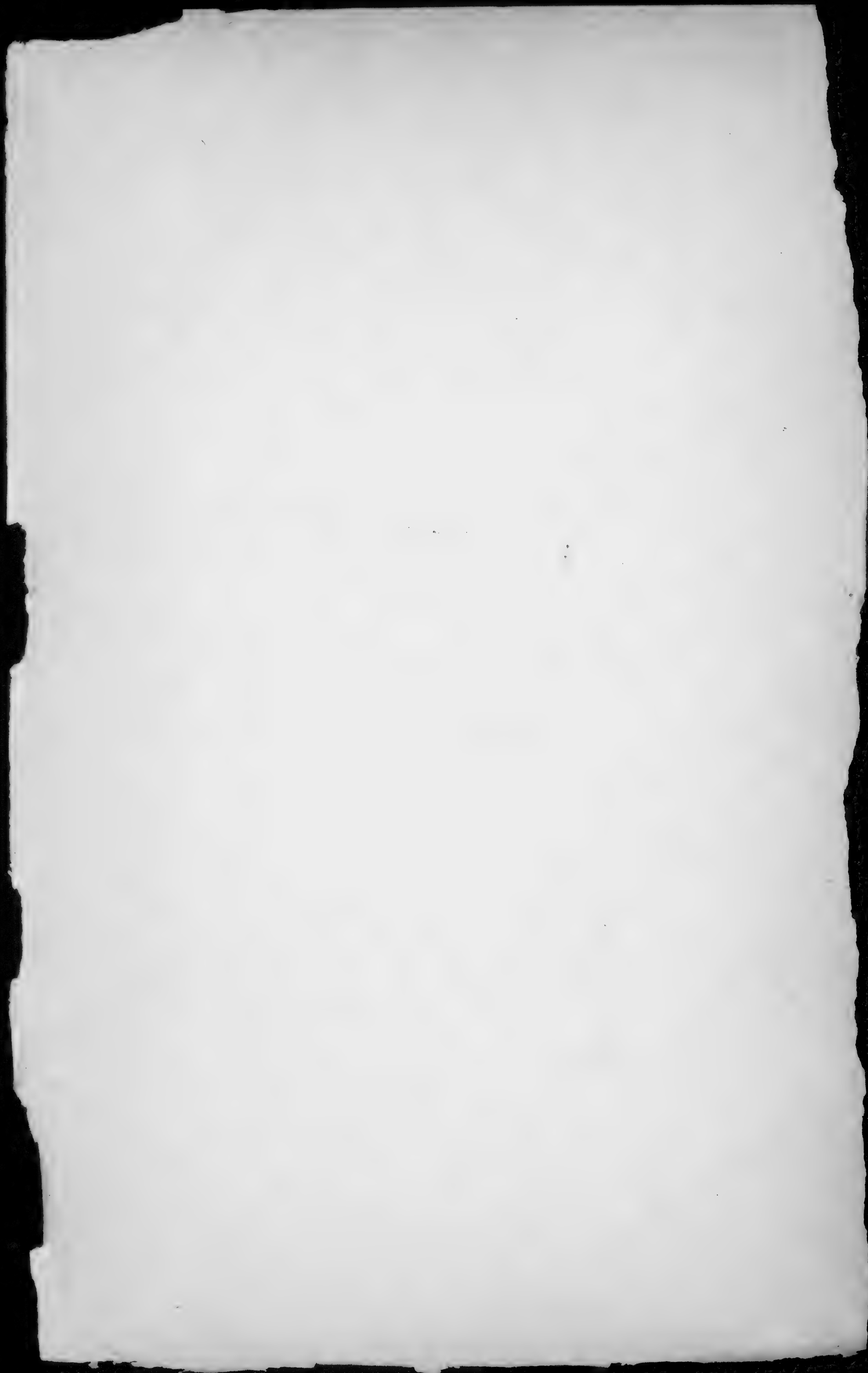
<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* X, 612D.

<sup>4</sup>279B-C; cf. *Rep.* X, 621C-D.

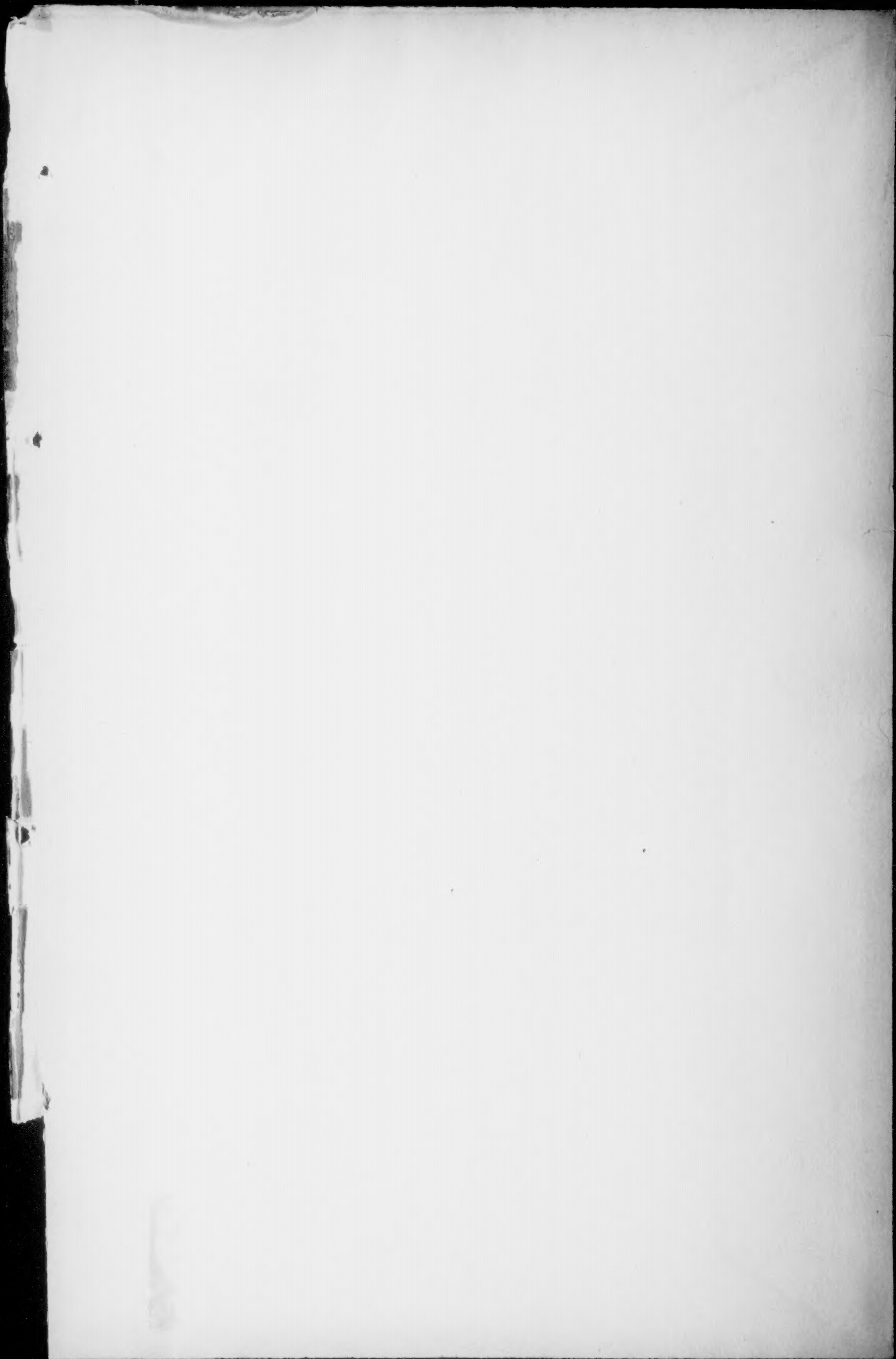




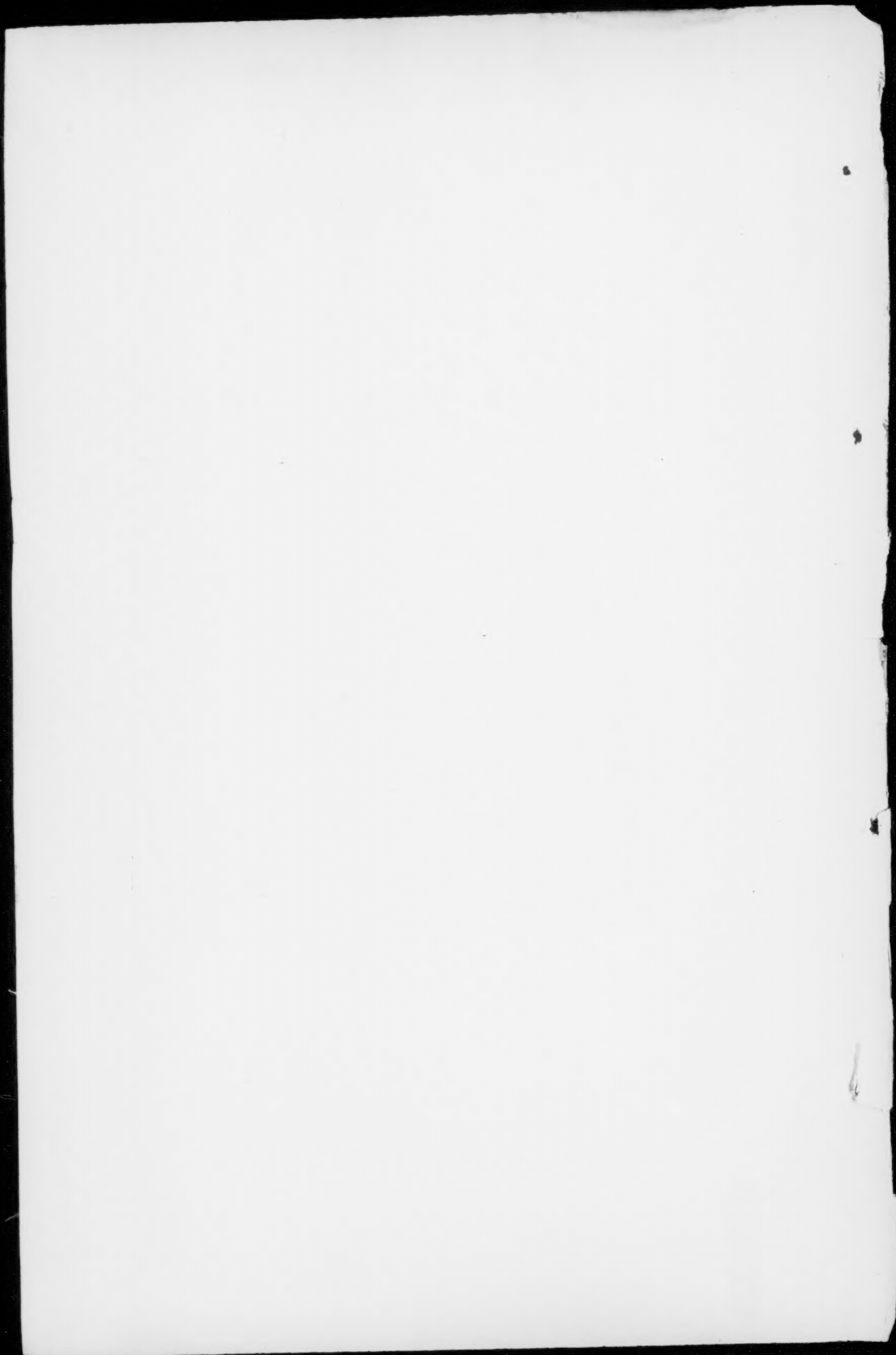














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